

FEBRUARY

VOL. 5 NO. 2

1901

PRICE 25 cts



ESSESS PUBLISHING COMPANY
NEW YORK

LONDON

PARIS



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RUMORS AND A RUNAWAY

By Caroline Duer

THE afternoon sun was sending long shafts of orange-colored light across the green carpet and the poppy-cushioned window-seats of Mrs. Donaldson's library. It was called the library because it had several bookcases full of novels and sporting records, and all the newspapers and magazines lay on a table in the corner; because the chairs were more comfortable there than anywhere else in the house, and because the men were allowed to smoke as they pleased and the dogs to sleep on the hearth-rug. There was another room called the music-room because it had a piano in it on which guests sometimes played, and a still more desert apartment went by the name of the drawing-room, because it was overfull of tables and chairs, brocade, gilding, pictures, mirrors, cabinets of Dresden china and silver toys, and nobody ever went into it.

Outside the house it was Autumn, and the curled leaves blew crisply down when the sharp fresh wind rustled the trees, but inside it was as Summer, for the sun and the crackling wood fires made an agreeable warmth, and the scent of hothouse flowers was heavy in the air.

William, the footman, was setting out the tea table beside the library fire, and Mr. Puffles, the butler, stood with his back to the genial glow and read the morning's paper at arm's length, punctuating each item of news with the comments of a ponderous and thoughtful mind.

"See what trouble they're having with them Boers," said Mr. Puffles. "You mark my words, William, that war's not over yet, nor it won't be

while there's a handful of them left together. It's a bad business getting a badger out of a barrel, a bad business, a bad business."

William said, "I believe you," and finding his chief's attention now engaged by the Chinese question, he succumbed to temptation and swallowed a particularly succulent cake at one mouthful.

"This Chinese matter is a queer thing. It's but right to Christianize them, of course, but they say that it costs more than the salary of two missionaries to convert one heathen. Now that don't seem right, William, it do not seem right."

"Indeed it do not, Mr. Puffles," returned the discreet William, hastily bolting another cake.

"It strikes me McKinley's bit off more than he can chew in the Philippines," continued Puffles, flattered by his subordinate's ready acquiescence in his views, and skimming a fresh column.

Unfortunately, William's resemblance to the President of these United States was here made manifest by so severe a fit of choking that Mr. Puffles was obliged to put down the paper and pat him on the back.

"You don't feel yourself in any way consumptive, I hope, young man?" he said, anxiously. "I had to part with my last footman on that account and no other. Consumption is a very serious affair when it once gets hold on a man, a very serious affair."

William barked out that his state was the result of an accident and in no way to be considered chronic, and the butler turned his attention to the tea tray.

"It's a strange thing how them drop cakes disappears," he observed, sternly. "I can't account for it unless the maids steal them on me in the pantry after the tray is ready. I see Mary sidling out of there with my own eyes not ten minutes ago," and Mr. Puffles, blinking the very eyes which he had accused Mary of annexing, cleared his throat, suggestively, and glanced at the footman for confirmation.

But William, though an ordinary man, was not lacking in chivalry.

"It weren't her," he said, shortly. "You may as well know, Mr. Puffles, that I'm great with Mary. She's my sweetheart, and don't you forget it, so what's said agin her is said agin me. She come to the pantry to tell me that she suspicioned as Mr. Maurice was engaged to Miss Julia Silverton, which I had asked her for her observances, as I'd some notions on the subject myself."

"They have it on them in the servants' hall, I am aware," remarked Puffles, goggling with interest. "But I hear she have encouraged others."

"The grooms in the stable passed me the word," said William, winking and wiping his eyes, which were yet full of tears from his coughing fit. "The very day she come, and that's a month ago now, pretty near, Thomas, who sat behind in the T-cart when Mr. Maurice drove her back from the station, Thomas says to me, 'That's a match,' he says."

"Thomas is a close observer," said the butler, "a very close observer. And if Mr. Maurice makes as good a husband as his brother, Mr. Gilbert, she'll be a lucky young lady, a very lucky young lady. I've served in Mr. Donaldson's family now these seven year, and I've no fault to find with him, nor yet with his wife. No fault to find."

"Mary says that Miss Silverton is free with her money, as a lady should be," continued William, "and she's awful taking in her ways. There's the carriage wheels! They're home. I guess I'd better light the kettle lamp. They come away after the

meet, most likely; they couldn't have follered," and he hastily transported himself after Puffles to the hall, where he appeared as much like an automaton as becomes a self-respecting footman.

A rustle of skirts on the floor and a ripple of high laughter in the air betrayed the approach of things feminine, and Mrs. Gilbert Donaldson entered the library, followed by her guest, Julia Silverton.

Mrs. Donaldson was very beautiful, yellow-haired and white-skinned, with the most delightfully aquiline of little noses and the shallowest, sleepest, most tawny eyes in the world. The hottest night, the coldest day, the longest journey, the most wearing anxiety never left a line of trouble or a trace of fatigue on her perfect face, nor softened the tones of her clear, hard voice.

Miss Silverton's good looks were more subtle. Her eyes were dusky blue, and though the surface laughed or languished, underneath they seemed full of the wonderment and mystery of all the ages of the world. The abundant brown waves of her hair clung more closely to her head than the fashion of the day demanded. Her mouth in repose was sweet and serious, despite the little secret curves of merriment at the corners. Her manner was courteous and considerate and her voice gentle.

"You don't mean to say you are cold, Julia?" said Mrs. Donaldson, as the younger woman drew near the fire, pulling off her gloves and warming her pink palms and widespread fingers at the blaze.

"I'm always cold when the Summer's over," answered Julia. "I feel stiff all over, like a snake, as soon as the thermometer goes below seventy. How glad I am that tea is ready! Very weak, please, Constance, with two lumps of sugar and no cream. I hate a thick drink!"

"There," said her friend, handing her the cup; "but I don't see how you can drink it like that, it's so washy."

"You don't see how I can do a

great many things that I do, or dislike a great many things that I dislike. It's a matter of habit."

"Or take so long in making up your mind what you do like, if that's a matter of habit," interrupted Mrs. Donaldson. "When are you and Maurice coming to an understanding? You really are the most tiresome people to watch through a flirtation."

"There's no occasion for watching us," said Miss Silverton, calmly, drawing the skirt of her brown cloth dress out of the way of a shower of sparks that had just burst in a miniature explosion from the flaming logs. "To all intents and purposes we are engaged."

"Since when?" cried Mrs. Donaldson. "I congratulate you both, but of course I can't pretend to be surprised. Gilbert will be delighted. I wonder whether Maurice has told him! I hope they'll get safely through the run. Maurice was on The Demon, and he's apt to rush his fences when he is fresh." Julia looked anxious. "But it's all right. He rides like a centaur. Shall you announce it at once? What will your ring be?" glancing at her own sparkling fingers.

"I don't know yet," said Julia, laughing, "but *not* a solitaire. No, no, I shall not announce it now. I hate long engagements, and being independent as I am, without any relations and quite my own mistress, I have nobody's opinion to ask. Of course Maurice has told Gilbert, but I should prefer that no one else know for a little while—just until we have our plans more settled."

"Well, I shall advise Maurice to hurry your plans, my dear; we all know you are a very elusive lady."

Julia looked up quickly. "I don't know what you mean," she said.

Mrs. Donaldson laughed her little, hard laugh. "Well, there have been stories about you—and John Herbert, for instance," she suggested.

"There would always have been stories about me and some man or other, because the death of my father and mother left me free, from the

moment I was grown up, to do what I pleased with myself and a modest competence. John Herbert was a celebrated artist, and I chose to make a friend of him. Of course, people talked, but I don't see how that points to my elusiveness."

"Are you sure you did not make something else of him?" inquired her hostess. "You may as well admit it; everyone says so."

"You mean a fool or a lover, I suppose," said Miss Silverton, "and that it would be rather a feather in my cap to confess it. Well, I'm afraid I can't take that glory to myself; but it is true that I was once almost engaged to Mr. Herbert for a week, and at the end of that time we decided that he could not be both my husband and a celebrated artist. That was almost two years ago. You see he preferred to retain the more independent position. Landscapes are less exacting than ladies, and one can represent them in what moods one pleases, and leave them when one is tired of them."

"Everybody says he was very much in love with you."

"And everybody else says I was very much in love with him, but as a matter of fact I do not think either of us was in love, and we did not understand each other in the least, though we were desperately interested. He made a picture of me once, the only portrait he ever painted, and he used to tell me I had an inscrutable expression, which flattered me immensely. It would have been a wonderful likeness if it had ever been finished. I always promised to go back for the last sittings. Perhaps some day I may."

"It's rather odd his having happened to take a house and come down here to paint this Autumn," remarked Constance, eyeing her friend narrowly.

But Julia's face gave no sign of discomposure.

"Is he really here?" she said. "What house has he taken, and when did he come? I have not seen him anywhere; have you?"

"No," returned the other. "But Maurice told me he had taken that little farm at the crossroads, and he came down last week."

"I wonder Maurice did not mention it to me."

"Perhaps he was jealous," suggested Mrs. Donaldson.

Maurice's ladylove laughed and helped herself to cake—her fancy set to the same kind as that beloved by William, the footman.

"I don't think he is of a jealous disposition," said she. "Of course, he is enough a man of the world to pay the woman he likes the compliment of watchful attention, but I think he would consider only himself to blame if my fancy went wandering. He would not be really 'jealous' unless I gave him cause sufficient to lead to his cutting off my nose, or whatever it is they do to untrustworthy ladies. Jealousy is an absurd, futile sort of passion. I can't understand it."

"How would you feel, now, if another woman tried to interfere between you and Maurice?" inquired Constance, curiously.

"Only reasonably amused at her efforts, at present," answered Julia. "I am not afraid, but if I were—if I thought that another woman could take him from me, I should try to find out what there was in her that pleased him, and do it better myself. And if she still attracted him she would be the stronger and have a right to win. At all events, I should not be jealous. I should play as long as there was any chance, and when the game was over throw my cards on the table with a good grace. How I hate cards, by the way! Don't play bridge this evening, Constance, please."

"Well, I like my rights," said Mrs. Donaldson. "And what belongs to me is not to be interfered with lightly, whether I care for it or not. People who fight me have all the trouble they want. You don't really care for your own way, Julia, even when you know what it is. I'm afraid you are rather weak, my dear."

Julia smiled, and then sighed re-

flectively. Was she weak? she wondered. In all minor questions she knew she yielded to Constance, who had distinct opinions on every subject, no matter how trifling; but was she weak in the things worth while to be strong about? She hoped not.

The sound of wheels on the gravel attracted their attention at this moment, and Mrs. Donaldson glanced out of the window.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed. "It's Mrs. Cacklethorpe's carriage. Now we shall have all the gossip of the neighborhood—why Mrs. Bramble has parted with her cook; who pays Mrs. Mongoose's bills; whether Mr. Crusty drinks or is only insane, and what brings Mr. Herbert to this bailiwick. She will be sure to ask you whether you are engaged to Maurice, so be prepared."

As she spoke the horses drew up at the door, and the bell pealed importantly. In a few minutes the sympathetic voice of Puffles announced Mrs. Cacklethorpe, and that stately lady entered the room, her long nose in the air, her stiff skirt pointed out ahead of her like the cowcatcher of an engine, and her humorous eyes roving from side to side in parrot glances. Many flounces rustled at her knees and a rich mantle hung from her shoulders.

"I thought I would come in for a few minutes as I was passin', Mrs. Donaldson," she said, "to ask you for the address of that housekeeper you spoke of the other day. If she is very good she might suit my friend, Mrs. Bramble, who is in great difficulties with her servants just now. Really, this servant question, my dear, complicates life dreadfully, and country life especially. Yes. But between ourselves, I'm afraid the Brambles are a little close—they count their pennies very carefully, and I have heard that there was a lack of butcher's meat below stairs, and a tendency to scrimp on skim-milk. Of course, when we go there everything is of the best, but I fancy they make up for it at other times. Yes. And you know, my dear, servants are human bein's,

after all, and they do not like to be starved in the midst of plenty. Of course we can't tell her that, but I thought a good housekeeper—"

"I'll give you the address," said Constance, crossing the room to the writing table, "and in the meantime Julia will make you a cup of tea."

"I have not had a chance to say how do you do, Miss Silverton?" Mrs. Cacklethorpe went on, seating herself beside the tea table. "We married women have such tiresome domestic details always harassin' our minds. Stay single as long as you can, my dear, though if all one hears is true, that won't be for long. You have been here for some time, haven't you? How much longer are you goin' to stay? I suppose you have not quite made up your mind. Well, it is a most charmin' place, as I said to Mr. Herbert—John Herbert, you know—who dined with me last night. You know John Herbert? But of course you do. Yes. I remember when we all thought— Well, well, we mustn't gossip too soon this time, must we?—in spite of his sudden appearance in the neighborhood. And then he's not the only one, is he? I'm afraid you modern young women are great hands for flirtin'. Yes. They did say this Summer, at Homburg, that Marian Dexterous was havin' a desperate affair with Herbert. But then Marian's affairs—I really believe they drove her husband into a decline. He had neither the heart nor the spirit to follow her through so many of them and resist disease, too, so he died, and she went about with her eyes turned up and a crape veil floatin' down her back, and everyone said she looked too lovely, and so young to be a widow. For my part, I don't think that kind of woman is ever too young or too old to be a widow."

"She certainly is a wonderful person," said Julia, handing Mrs. Cacklethorpe her cup. "I don't know anybody who gives you such an impression of health and strength and a sort of joyous vitality as she does."

She is always in high spirits. And how she rides! She has the pluck of a schoolboy."

"Pluck? Yes, I suppose she has," answered Mrs. Cacklethorpe. "I know I'd never have the courage to go flyin' over those great big fences, even if I did have a gentleman on each side of me and one ridin' behind, to pick me up if I fell off."

"I'm afraid he'd be more likely to jump on you, if you fell off, Mrs. Cacklethorpe," said Constance, with her high little laugh. "Here's the address you wanted. The woman used to keep house for old Mr. Donaldson; that is why I know something about her. When he and my sister-in-law went to live abroad they took her with them, but she didn't like it, and after trying it for some months has just come home. I don't recommend her. I never recommend servants or dressmakers; but she might do."

"Well, I'll tell Mrs. Bramble," returned her visitor, rising. "And speakin' of your father-in-law, I must tell you that when I was in Paris they said *he* was perfectly crazy about Marian Dexterous. That was last Winter, you know, when she thought she had enough voice for the stage and went abroad to study. I couldn't help thinkin' of it to-day when I saw your husband so attentive to her. Everyone said that old Mr. Donaldson was perfectly infatuated by her, and his daughter was frightened to death for fear he'd marry her, or leave her a fortune or somethin'. Aren't men strange, my dear? You never know where the old Adam will break out; the older the queerer. Yes. Well, I must go home. Did you know, speakin' of queer people, that they have had to shut up old Mr. Crusty? Couldn't stand him, my dear. Took to squirtin' the garden hose in the drawin'-room winder, because he said the devil was standin' in a corner all dressed in flames. A little touched here," tapping her forehead. "All cocktails, my dear. Good-bye. Mr. Cacklethorpe hates me to keep those horses standin'."

Good-bye, Miss Silverton; don't keep us waitin' too long for news."

Mrs. Donaldson touched the bell, and Puffles, who was already stationed in the hall, feeling, doubtless, that it was about time for the visit to terminate, reproachfully conducted Mrs. Cacklethorpe to her carriage.

Julia gave herself a little shake and stretched her arms up above her head with a half-smothered yawn.

"Well, now we know about everything," she said, "and can go peacefully to dress for dinner. I wish the men were home."

"Here they come," exclaimed Constance. "I hear their horses' hoofs on the road. I must tease Gilbert about Mrs. Dexterous."

"I hope there were no falls today," said Julia.

"Oh, my dear, when you have been married as long as I have you won't be so nervous about it. I never worry myself until I have to. It's much the best way."

Julia did not answer. She went to the window and peered out into the dusk. Beyond the terrace, which terminated in a balustrade, with urns that marked the position of the steps leading down to the sunk garden, she could just distinguish the dim yellowish loop of the road where it turned off to the stable. It seemed as if two shadows passed across it, and she sighed a little sigh of relief and slid down among the cushions in the window-seat, resting her head against the wainscoting. They were safe, then. She thought of Maurice with a feeling of tenderness and content and lack of responsibility which was delightful to her. Other men who loved her had sometimes been an effort. He was none. Whatever mood she was in was the mood that seemed to suit him best. He was always pleased with her, and she was so mentally at ease with him that she hardly knew where her ideas ended and his began. He never took things for granted. He never made mistakes. If she wanted to talk, he listened and loved her, and if she preferred to remain

silent he was always able and willing to amuse her. In fact, he was so perfect a lover that Miss Silverton sometimes forgot that the man inside was not the kind of person with whom she could do exactly as she pleased, and upon the few occasions when this was brought somewhat forcibly to her notice it gave her sensations which, though half-indignant, were far from unpleasing. She was beginning to be lazy about choosing her own path through the world. It was a relief at times to give up the management of everything, including herself, to someone who knew the way she wanted to go as well as she did, if not better. Her real power over him she never doubted.

She watched for the two figures to come up from the stable. Somehow it reminded her of her childhood, this sitting curled up in the window-seat, looking out into the gathering darkness. She used to sit so when she was a little girl, a very melancholy little girl, thinking of ships that went down in the night, and children who were lost and couldn't get home, and one awful story, which ought never to have been in a child's book at all, about an evilly disposed gentleman who kept a sort of inn among the mountains somewhere and murdered any traveler who owned a watch of sufficient beauty to excite covetousness. Julia had not minded his desire for watches, nor even his somewhat high-handed method of obtaining them, but he had had a secretive habit of throwing the bodies of his victims down an apparently bottomless well, and it had been one of the horrors of her childhood. Suppose one of them had not been quite dead, and he had gone on falling, falling, down, down, forever into that black hole!

She remembered the story to-night and laughed a little at her old terrors, and thought she would tell Maurice about them. One could tell Maurice anything, secure of his sympathy if not of his approval. She wondered how much he knew about her and John Herbert. They had

really been pretty nearly in love with each other, he and she. But after all, what was there to know? Even supposing he had come here to see her, which was, of course, an absurd thing to think—oh, ridiculous!—there was nothing to know or tell. Constance's voice roused her.

"Are they coming yet, 'Marianna?' You look too pathetic."

Before Julia could reply the silence was broken by the sound of stiffly booted feet stamping themselves limber on the piazza, and by Gilbert's hearty voice exclaiming, as the brothers came in together:

"He pecked badly when he landed after that last fence. The poor old beggar was tired out, and I nearly went over his head. But I say, Maurice, didn't Mrs. Dexterous go well! I declare, she's afraid of nothing, and that big brute she rode was out of her hand the whole way. Why didn't you follow, Constance?" he continued, for by this time he had got within speaking distance of his wife. "You could have seen the whole run from the road."

"I didn't care about it particularly," she answered, "and Julia was cold, so we came home."

"Julia mustn't be allowed to take cold, on any account," he said, his kind, handsome, red-brown face lighting up with a smile. "Maurice has told me, Miss Silverton, and I never was more pleased about anything. I'm awfully glad, and I have nearly shaken his arm off congratulating him. If I had not mistrusted with the branch of a tree in the dark, and so covered one side of my face with green mould, I should ask permission to kiss my future sister-in-law, but as it is——"

"As it is, your future sister-in-law will kiss you," said Julia, laughing and standing on tiptoe to suit the action to the word, "without waiting to be asked."

Gilbert looked much gratified.

"That is really an awfully nice woman," he could be heard saying to his wife in the hall, as she swept him off to have his bruised cheek treated

with some particular remedy of her own.

They had got no further than the foot of the stairs, however, when there was a second tramping of feet on the piazza, the upper half of the door swung open and a laughing, joyous face, with pink cheeks, loosened hair and a riding hat pushed well off the forehead, looked in.

"Oh, please, Constance dear, have pity on a poor wayfarer," said the owner of the face, settling her accurately tied white stock with one hand and pushing open the lower part of the door with the other. "Crusticuss wrenched off a shoe scrambling down a bank on the way home and he has been limping along for miles, until finally I had to get off and lead him. And there we were, ever so far from help—a great, big, lame horse and a very tired and footsore rider. You can't think how forlorn it was, Mr. Donaldson! And then I thought of you and your comfortable stable, and I stopped and gave Crusticuss to your man. You don't mind, do you? He was so pleased, poor old fellow, not to go any farther."

"Come in, Marian!" cried Constance. "You needn't go any farther, either; we will take care of you and send you home after dinner."

"Of course," echoed Gilbert, looking at her merry eyes and glowing color with undisguised admiration, "of course you will stay to dinner."

"Well, I was rather hoping you might let me have a bath and a bite, but what shall I do with Mr. Herbert?" looking over her shoulder into the darkness, out of which a tall figure suddenly seemed to grow. "He was taking an owl's prow at this unearthly hour—to rest his eyes, he said—and I met him just at your gate and made him walk up to the house with me. Won't you ask him to dine, too, Constance?"

A cordial invitation was extended to Mr. Herbert across the door, and he accepted it with a hesitation of manner that sat somewhat strangely on a person of his decided appearance.

John Herbert was a man whom Nature had singled out for success by giving him the power of belief in himself without destroying his appreciation of other people's beliefs. He took life lightly and tolerantly, but his eyebrows were intensely drawn together, and his gray eyes observed you keenly from beneath them. His red hair rose crested from his head, and he carried his chin forward in a way that those who did not admire him called supercilious. It was evident that he did not quite like the position in which Mrs. Dexterous had placed him, but also that, no matter where he might be placed, he was infinitely capable of making the best of the situation.

"I will dine with pleasure if I may go back to my house to dress," he said. "One feels so demoralized after a long tramp."

"He is so particular," said Mrs. Dexterous, in the possessive tone a woman insensibly adopts to the man with whom she is flirting. "Now, I must stay as I am, and I am much more demoralized by my long tramp than he is. He didn't have to drag hundreds of pounds of lame horse about these dismal lanes."

"Constance will lend you anything you want," promised Constance's husband, hospitably. "You'd better have a glass of sherry and a biscuit, Mrs. Dexterous. You must be tired. The tea will be cold by this time, and dinner is a long way off."

The whole party moved toward the library.

"Shall we find the lovers there?" asked Marian, with an exaggerated air of caution.

"Etiquette, etiquette, Marian!" cried Mrs. Donaldson from behind. "There are no people answering to that name in this house."

"Oh, well, my dear, we all guess what is going on, if we don't exactly see it," replied the other, laughing mockingly. "We are not so dull as all that, you know."

"You might enlighten the ignorance of the stranger within your gates," suggested Mr. Herbert. "If

there is anything going on which a fellow mortal ought to know, tell me. I've been abroad for some time, you must remember."

"It is only some nonsense Mrs. Dexterous chooses to think about my brother-in-law and Miss Silverton, who is staying with me; and what Mrs. Dexterous thinks she doesn't mind saying, you know."

"Come, Constance, isn't it really true?" in an engaging whisper.

"So Miss Silverton is staying with you?" said John Herbert. "She used to be a very good friend of mine. I hope she has not forgotten me."

These last words were spoken as they entered the room, and Julia came forward to meet them.

"You are so little forgotten," she answered, shaking hands with Mrs. Dexterous, but looking at him, "that only a few minutes ago I was speaking of you to Mrs. Donaldson."

They stood talking together for a little, apart, while the others formed a group round the fire. Maurice was being rallied by Mrs. Dexterous for having gone less well than usual that day, by reason of having lately lost his heart (pause)—for hunting.

"Is it really you?" said John Herbert. "What tricks has Fate been playing us that we have not met for so long?"

"You did not know I was here?" (One may be interested in such matters, although one is engaged.)

"Oh, your comings and goings are chronicled in the papers," he answered. "I knew that Miss Julia Silverton had been staying at Meadowford, but I did not know whether I should still find you here. Ladies of your kind are elusive. They seldom stay long in one place."

"That is the second time this afternoon I have been called elusive," complained Julia. "People seem to have a very mistaken impression of my character, but I did not think that I should find you in the ranks of my traducers."

"I don't know who has better cause to be," he responded, laughing.

"Everybody knows that I have a right to complain of you."

"There's not a pin to choose between us, so far as our conduct toward each other goes," she said, smiling; "but I don't call you names. On the contrary, I am *very* glad to see you again, and I hope you are equally glad to see me."

"I'm going to dine here to-night," he observed, abruptly.

"I was always one to accept the inevitable gracefully," answered Miss Silverton.

"May we sit comfortably in a corner and talk frivolously while the others play bridge, as they are pretty sure to do if Mrs. Dexterous has anything to say about it?"

"Frivolously? Not at all. I shall give you a full, true and particular account of every minute of my life since I last saw you." It is exhilarating to believe one's self admired, and Julia, finding herself in good spirits, could not help being a little mischievous.

"It may even come to that," he said. "A woman will tell a man almost anything rather than sit silent with him after dinner, but perhaps it would be safer for me to play bridge and leave you to the society of—shall we say another adorer?"

"Prudence was ever your strongest failing," returned Julia, "so we had better say another adorer."

"Now, dear Mr. Herbert, if you are going home to dress, do go, or you will keep Mrs. Donaldson waiting for dinner," broke in Mrs. Dexterous.

Mr. Herbert, recognizing the clear voice of duty, gradually took his departure. As he walked down the dark roads he was amused to think of the little interview he had just gone through. So many things had happened since he and Miss Silverton had last spoken together. He remembered that their parting had been commonplace enough on the surface, but he had been really fond of her, so fond of her that he had felt then that he must choose between her and his art. He wondered if she had ever cared for him, and came to

the conclusion that she had not. She never would have cared for Donaldson if she had, he decided. The fact that he himself had lately fallen under the special and particular fascination of Mrs. Dexterous seemed to have no bearing on the case. Indeed, he tried not to admit to himself the extent of Marian's power over him. She was handsome, of course, and supremely audacious and amusing. Donaldson, he rather thought, was dull.

Mrs. Dexterous, at the same moment, was being extremely amusing at his expense. She never spared anybody, not being sensitive, as some women are, for the dignity of the man they regard as their property. A pleasant little morsel of Homburg scandal, in which John Herbert and a forward foreign princess played the principal parts, was detailed for the entertainment of the company, and then she took herself off up stairs, declaring that she must make an exhaustive survey of Constance's wardrobe before she decided what to wear.

Maurice Donaldson and his lady-love were left alone, and they stood looking at each other a moment in silence. Outside—for the shutters were not closed—could be seen the dim outlines of woods against the sky and a shivering little crescent moon drifting along in a veil of cloud. Inside the room was lighted only by the fire, and the flickering shadows on the ceiling seemed to open and shut like the sticks of a great fan. The warm glow shone up into Julia's face as she stood looking down into it, but only outlined Maurice's strong, broad-shouldered figure as he leaned against the mantelpiece, his head thrown so far back that his face was almost completely in darkness.

"*You* haven't mistrusted with the branch of a tree, I hope," said Miss Silverton, "that you are hiding your head in the shadows there above me."

"No," returned Maurice, laughing. "Your majesty's property is as yet intact, save and excepting a hole in the heart which you very well wot of."

"You can't say I have not done my best to fill it," she said, lightly.

"So full, that at the present moment it threatens to overflow and sweep away your royal highness and all the proprieties." He took her hands in one of his and tilted up her chin with the other. "How I do love you! I suppose I appear to be a decently stolid, self-controlled sort of person, but it is not so always, is it, little Julia?"

"I have known times when you were not," looking up at him with a demure mouth and cheeks that flamed under his kisses, "but I should not like you if I could not make you like me like that."

"What a lot of 'likes'! Isn't there room for a single 'love' in that sentence? 'Swear me a good mouth-filling oath, Kate, like a lady as thou art,' that you do love me and couldn't possibly think of loving anybody else."

Miss Silvertown laughed. "And I who told Constance only to-day that you didn't understand the meaning of the word jealousy!"

"I don't," he said; "I couldn't be jealous of you, in the ordinary acceptance of the word, though I might do things that would astonish you."

"And yet there are times in every woman's life that her particular man might be jealous of," suggested Julia.

"It's part of the life of every little fine lady to have men make love to her before her own particular man appears, if you mean that. And of course, the prettier she is the more of them do it."

"And how about *after* he appears?" said she, the curved corners of her mouth deepening.

"After he appears, he takes care of that by making better love to her himself, as you will see," returned Maurice, convincingly. "So your majesty may manage your subjects as you please, provided you give me permission to manage you for the rest of your life."

He put a hand on each of her shoulders and bent his square, determined face down to hers.

"Is it a bargain?" he whispered, with his mouth against her ear.

"Maurice," observed his ladylove, gravely, "you have evidently seen a great deal of women. Not that I object. It takes a great many women to educate a husband—look at Solomon!—and I never wanted to be first, but I do want to be last, so swear *me* a good round oath—No, that's absurd. I don't want you to swear. You love me because I choose, and you shall always love me for that reason."

"I could almost swear that it was a little because I chose, too," said Maurice, smiling. "You don't suppose I did it on compulsion, do you?"

"I don't suppose you would have done it at all if I had left you alone."

"Oh, that's what you think, is it? Am I to take it, from that, that all previous worshippers at your shrine have been as forcibly attracted?"

Julia nodded. "A great many of them," she observed, ingenuously. "But in justice to myself I must admit that, however much they struggled against falling in love with me, they struggled even more against leaving off. I suppose men like some women as soon as they see them, and some women are an acquired taste. But that is the most lasting kind, isn't it, Maurice?"

"If you are that kind, sweetheart."

"How nicely you say that! I took a great deal of trouble to please you and to make you like me, Maurice, and now—" She stopped, looking as shamefaced as a little girl confessing a theft of jam.

"And now?" he echoed, encouragingly.

"Now I have to take a great deal more trouble to hide from other people how much I like you."

"Do I please you, dear? You sweet, you darling, there never was any woman in the world like you. You have the most enchanting eyes, and the softest voice, and the most maddening ways—"

"There's nothing on earth so good as love, is there?" gasped Julia, as he set her down.

The room was deserted when Wil-

liam the footman came in to remove the tea things and light the lamps. He had also been enjoined by Puffles to keep up the fire, and as he approached the hearth he saw Miss Silverton's handkerchief and her little black-spotted veil, neatly folded and run through with a tiny turquoise pin, lying on the floor near a crop and a pair of gloves that he recognized as Mr. Maurice Donaldson's.

"I'll take my dying dick," said William to himself—this was a very solemn oath—"that the pair as dropped you was a-courting. I wish old Puffles could see it. Talk about inanimate objects! I call it circumstantial evidence." And he picked up the discovered articles and deposited them upon opposite corners of the hall table, discreetly.

And the lamps burned with a subdued light, as if they knew they were alone in the library, and the fire blazed and crackled to itself, throwing a deeper red upon the poppy-colored curtains, which had now been drawn, and the chairs and tables stood so primly in their places that a little bright-eyed mouse, that had defied both the dogs and Mrs. Donaldson's excellent housekeeping, ran out from beneath the sofa and snatched a crumb of cake that had fallen on the floor when the tea tray was carried away.

II

JULIA had just returned from a drive with John Herbert. They had fallen into the habit of going out together once or twice a week, making elaborate explanations to each other as to why it should amuse them, two non-hunting members of a hunting community, to follow the runs as persistently as they did. Constance, who did not hunt, either, but was extremely fond of riding, generally preferred to go to the meets on horseback, where she never found herself without a companion, for the beautiful Mrs. Donaldson was universally admired. Mr. Herbert had a cart and a

sober-minded cob, who, fortunately, drove himself with great dignity and decorum, for his owner openly avowed his distaste for horses and his inability to give them the attention they demanded.

"They require such a lot of looking after," he used to say. "I want something that will just go of itself and leave me free to take an interest in outside things. Now, one of those slow little tinker's donkeys, the one-step-enough-for-me kind, would suit me admirably."

"Only then we couldn't see the run," Julia would observe, taking the reins from him as a matter of course; "and you know you always say how picturesque it is to watch the dogs come streaming over the fields, and the men's red coats like sparks flying along against the blue Autumn haze, with the changing woods for a background. There! I was so struck by the sentence that I committed it to memory. I hope you are flattered."

Flattered or not, he always protested that he was not especially interested in seeing the run, the drive was all he cared about; and she usually responded by offering to conduct him to Scrabble Hill, a place from which an admirable view of all the surrounding country could be obtained, "from the centre all round to the sea;" but somehow, although they had been out several times together, they had never been to Scrabble Hill, while their acquaintance with the short cuts across the plains, their knowledge of the hedges, ditches, brooks, banks and fences of the neighborhood was remarkable. Another curious thing was that neither of them noticed the other's absorbed silence when Mrs. Dexterous or Maurice Donaldson came galloping into sight.

Of course, people talked. Mrs. Cacklethorpe said that John Herbert knew which side his bread was buttered on, and wasn't going to be such a fool as to let the heiress slip through his fingers a second time. (Julia was hardly an heiress, and John Herbert's work commanded prices that would

have made him famous if the pictures themselves had not.) That, for her part, she thought male centaurs had better marry female centaurs, if there ever were such creatures, my dear, which she rather doubted, and she believed that Marian Dexterous would make a very good wife for a riding man. Yes. Always in the saddle, you know, and out in the open air, where her high spirits could do nobody any harm. Mrs. Cacklethorpe only wished that Maurice Donaldson would take a fancy to her, and perhaps she'd encourage him after she had finished making a fool of Gilbert. Mrs. Cacklethorpe was distressed on poor dear Constance's account, of course, but then these cold, beautiful women, my dear, they never could hold the affection of a warm-hearted fellow like Gilbert. She was also sorry for Maurice, whom she understood to be ready to cut his throat for the sake of that sly little Miss Silverton.

Sly little Miss Silverton and wily Mr. Herbert, unmindful of comment, drove together, just the same, and secretly watched, with their hearts in their throats, the wonderful performances of their respective true loves. Only Mr. Herbert would not admit to his head how much his heart was in love with the widow, while Julia took every opportunity of proving to herself how superior was Maurice in every way to every man whom she had ever known.

She wished that he did not love hunting so much. Three afternoons in the week it took him away from her, and she was constantly frightened lest some accident should happen to him, and prayed, in violent pagan gusts of terror, that such might be averted. But, being as near a reasonable person as a mere woman can be, she said as little as possible of her fears and as much as possible of her pride in him, trying to emulate Constance, whose nerves were so perfect that she could watch Gilbert through a rattling fall with an outwardly unmoved countenance. Men hated to be made a fuss over, she said.

But on this particular day, when Julia returned to the house, she found Mrs. Donaldson there before her in a distinctly annoyed frame of mind, her eyes quite wide open with anger and her mouth firmly set.

"Really," she said, "Gilbert is too tiresome! I haven't been able to ride to-day, because my new saddle has gone to the village to have a little more stuffing put into it, and when I came to inquire I found he had lent my second one to Marian Dexterous, because she said hers rubbed her horse's back. Now, it's all very well for Gilbert to be generous, but that saddle was mine, and he ought to have asked me before he promised it to anybody. He won't do it again in a hurry! He is entirely too fond of lending things in a good-natured way. I hate to have my things lent. I don't mind giving them outright—that's different. I don't know what has got into Gilbert lately. I think he is bewitched." She laughed in a half-amused, half-annoyed way, and went on:

"Poor old Gilbert! He's so unsuspicious that anybody can circumvent him. The other evening I met the gardener's boy coming out of the gate with a big basket of chrysanthemums, and when I asked what he was doing with them he said Mr. Donaldson had told him to leave them at Mrs. Dexterous's cottage on his way home. So I just took a card out of my cardcase—I happened to have been paying some visits—and wrote an affectionate message on it and sent it with the flowers. Marian must have been surprised. She didn't know that I had been watching her little games. She is trying to pique John Herbert by flirting with these other men. I know her ways so well! 'Dear Mr. Donaldson, won't you give me a lead over this fence? I know nobody will take it but you,' and, 'Isn't it too bad that the flowers I ordered for dinner to-night haven't come? What shall I do, Mr. Donaldson? You always help poor and deserving people.' And that goose of a Gilbert thinks her delightful. Well, I like Marian my-

self, but I am not going to stand any nonsense of this sort."

"But what difference does it make?" said Julia. "You couldn't be really jealous of her. I should think her manœuvres would only amuse you."

"You don't understand, my dear," said Constance. "I'm not in the least jealous, only I won't have any woman imagine that she can amuse herself with my property. And these rides home from the run where they always miss their way—the idea! when Gilbert knows every stone in every road for miles about—and these loiterings over afternoon tea, and these invitings of herself to dinner are going to stop here and now, Mrs. Cacklethorpe notwithstanding."

"Well, it's natural," answered Julia, with a little shrug, "that you should know your own affairs best, but if I were you I should just ignore the whole thing."

"Opinions differ. You may not care what people say about you, but I don't like to have it gossiped all over the country every time Mrs. Cacklethorpe sees Gilbert with Marian, and he shall have a piece of my mind before we dine there to-night."

"Are we dining at the Cacklethorpes' to-night?" asked Julia. "I had quite forgotten it. I wonder if Maurice remembers? I think I'll go down and remind him."

"I did not hear them come in," said Constance. "Why don't you ring and ask first?"

"I heard their voices in the hall a few minutes ago," answered Miss Silvertown, blushing a little, angry blush as she noticed the amused smile with which her remark was greeted. "My ears are sharper than my tongue still."

She left Constance's room, in which the two ladies had been sitting, crossed the gallery and ran lightly down the wide, red-carpeted staircase. She had to pass through the drawing-room, and before she could reach the library door she heard a rustle of paper and Gilbert's voice, saying:

"So he'll be starting directly, and what the deuce he means by it heaven only knows. All this mystery as to the cause of his journey, and his begging me to keep it quiet, and all that sort of thing, are most unlike him. Poor old governor! I hope he's not getting queer in his head, or anything. His letter is really rather crazy, don't you think so?"

"If anything were wrong," answered Maurice, "Alice would be sure to write. And if she had not thought he was fit to come alone she would have come with him."

"Unless he gave her the slip," suggested Gilbert. "That is possible. Here's Julia!" seeing her in the doorway. "Is Constance coming down? No? Well," throwing away his cigarette, with a regretful gesture, "I must go up and see her. I wonder what time she ordered the carriage for. What a confounded nuisance it is having to go out to dinner to-night!"

His tall, slightly bowed figure disappeared through the portières, and the two fox terriers that had been asleep on the hearth rug rose, yawned, stretched first their fore and then their hind quarters, and followed him.

Julia came and sat down in a low chair near the fire, and Maurice, rising, dragged his close beside her and possessed himself of her hands for a minute, which he kissed one after the other and then put back in her lap.

"Such a nice, satisfactory little lady to come home to!" he said.

"Am I not?" responded Miss Silvertown, leaning her cheek against his for an instant and as rapidly withdrawing it. "No, Maurice, not for a minute—I mean, not again for a minute. I want to tell you. I couldn't help hearing something Gilbert was saying to you as I came into the library. Was it something I ought not to have heard? It began about a mysterious journey and your father."

"Oh, it's all right, dear. There is nothing you shouldn't know. Only Gilbert is worried because my father writes that he is coming over at once on business, and that as the business is private and particular he doesn't

want anything said about it. He says, 'not even to your wife'—writing to his eldest son, you understand, which naturally does not forbid me to tell mine, especially as she happens to have heard it already, through no fault of anybody's."

"Do you think your father will like me, Maurice? I should think he would. I am very pretty in my manners to old gentlemen. Is he hard to please?"

"The most amiable old person who ever existed. I'm the only person you will find it hard to please. I am so critical and fault-finding, where you are concerned. I say, Julia, why don't you hasten your fineries a little, or get them afterward, and be married while he is out here? It seems to me it would be very dutiful, and not entirely without other merits as a plan."

"Your passion and fire carry everything before them," said Julia, laughing. "I will consider the proposition. Do you really want me to marry you so soon?"

"Do I really want you to—? Well, of all the disingenuous remarks I ever heard you make—and they have not been few—that is the most disingenuous. You deserve to be picked up and carried off to the nearest magistrate, and married out of hand, without benefit of clergy; and I'd do it for the comparatively insignificant sum of twenty-five cents."

"And I've left my purse up stairs," said Julia, regretfully.

Now, while these two were talking together happily enough down stairs, a conversation of a very different nature was taking place in the room above them. Constance had not neglected the opportunity of telling her husband, not only what she thought of his conduct, but what everybody else thought or would be likely to think. If she had put it on the ground of unkindness and lack of consideration toward herself, the good-natured Gilbert would have been softened in a minute, but to be told plainly that you are being made a fool and a cat's-paw of by the woman you

rather admire, while all your neighbors look on and laugh, is quite enough to vex any gentleman, especially after he has had a fatiguing run and a worrying letter from his father.

For once Gilbert permitted himself to be sulky, and after talking until his arguments were exhausted and his patience also, he ended by absolutely declining to discuss the matter further or to go out to dinner with her, either. Constance could not believe her ears at first, but he made it plain to her.

"But, my dear Gilbert, you *can't* do a thing like that!"

"Oh, can't I?" returned he, for once thoroughly put out. "You just watch me and see. I'm dead tired, and I am not going to their infernal old dinner, and you may make what excuses for me you please."

"Well, then, I had better stay at home, too," said Constance, helplessly—she was not used to her husband in this mood. "It will at least keep their table even. Oh, it's absurd, Gilbert. You must go. We accepted days ago."

"I am not going, and that is the end of it," he answered, walking toward his dressing-room door. "You had better telephone and say so, but I advise you to go. You won't find me a very pleasant companion," and he shut the door with more emphasis than seemed altogether necessary.

Mrs. Donaldson telephoned, and found that, while the loss of her husband's company was regretted, her own was still greatly desired, the voice of her hostess assuring her that she always had an extra man or two. "They like to come when they are stayin' at the club, you know, my dear, and it's convenient to have them, in case of accidents."

As he heard his brother pass the door on his way down stairs, Gilbert called him into the dressing-room.

"I'm not going to-night," he said. "I'm dog-tired, and Constance has got some ridiculous idea into her head about Marian Dexterous and me—she can be most exasperating when she likes—and she said so much that I

rather lost my temper for the evening. Anyhow, I said I wouldn't go, and I won't; but I declare," went on the easy-going fellow, "I hate to be on bad terms with people. Always did, you know; and I don't really want to vex her. So I wish, my dear boy, you'd do something for me to-night if Mrs. D. is there, as I'm pretty sure she will be. You see, I was going to drive her over to the club to-morrow to see the big golf match. I wish you'd just get an opportunity to say to her that I have to go to town on business. I'll go, too," added Gilbert, self-righteously. "There ought to be something for me to attend to."

"I'll make a point of mentioning it," said Maurice, gravely; "both your going and your regrets that you cannot have the pleasure of taking her to the golf match."

"I suppose *you* wouldn't take her?" continued Gilbert, suggestively.

"I am driving Julia. Don't you worry about Mrs. Dexterous. She will manage her affairs perfectly without assistance from either of us. I am afraid you are falling a little under her influence, old man. Pull up!"

When he went down Constance and Julia were standing in the hall, peach-colored and pink-cloaked, with impatient, satin-shod feet tapping the floor.

"Do come along, Maurice!" cried his sister-in-law. "We have nearly two miles to drive and only five minutes to do it."

The horses traveled fast, however, and they were not very late. Mrs. Cacklethorpe, in a splendid gray brocaded gown covered with gold sunflowers, received them very graciously, and told Maurice that he must take his brother's place and Mrs. Dexterous down to dinner.

"It's all right, my dear," she said to Constance; "I wasn't goin' to lose your society if Mr. Gilbert had got a chill. It's this loiterin' home after huntin' that does it. They get so hot ridin' at that breakneck pace and then they go crawlin' home, and it's no wonder. I suppose you're glad enough to get them back with all their bones.

I always have an extra man or two dinin' at this season, in case of accident, as I told you. Did they announce dinner? Yes. Here's Mr. Cacklethorpe for you. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Bramble likes the housekeeper now, but it won't last, my dear."

The party was as well assorted as such parties usually are. Constance and Mr. Cacklethorpe—whose personality was so faint beside that of his wife that nothing remained of it but a pair of wistful eyes and a little dim voice that occasionally said funny things—sat at one end of the big table, and looked across many flat beds of red leaves and purple asters, until they beheld Mrs. Cacklethorpe and a very famous lawyer with a prominent nose, white whiskers and the hearty laugh of conscious humor, opposite to them. Mrs. Dexterous, Maurice, a merry, talkative little actress, and a man who would not talk to her because he was bewitched by Constance's beauty, occupied one side, and Julia, Mr. Herbert, two hunting souls and a lad made up the other.

Maurice had not been at all ill-pleased to take in Mrs. Dexterous, thinking it a good opportunity to deliver his brother's message, and, incidentally, to see for himself what sort of woman she was. That she was handsome he could not deny—not with the cold, still, star-light beauty of Constance, nor the subtle, changing April charm of Julia, but like a warm, breezy, sunshine-flooded day. He looked at the beautiful, fresh pink-and-white of her coloring and the rather too even edges of her very white teeth, which showed when she smiled; at her firm throat and broad, creamy shoulders, and did not blame Gilbert very much if he had enjoyed hours spent in the society of anything so good to look at and so gloriously alive. Her conversation was a slight shock to a sober-minded man, but it was certainly amusing.

"But feel my arm," she was saying to the lawyer, who had been complimenting her on her prowess in the field. "I'm just like that all over.

It would take more than that to tire me."

The eminent gentleman, who had furtively laid a few fingers on the marble member proffered him, hastily withdrew them, as if he feared he might be called on to make further tests, and plunged his nose into his champagne glass.

"It's funny how people change," she went on, turning to Maurice, whom she had so far ignored. "I used to be a thin, delicate girl, who had not the strength of a rat nor the spirit of a mouse, and always cried when anything agitated me. I remember I cried for a month because I thought they would not let me marry Dan" (Daniel had been the name of her late husband), "and then the day I was married I cried all the way up the aisle and all the way down again."

"Cursed with a granted prayer," said Maurice, impertinently.

She looked ostentatiously perplexed for a moment and then smiled.

"They say you will be in that position yourself soon," she answered.

"It's astonishing what idle and malicious people *will* say," he returned, tranquilly. "They haven't spared you either, lately, you know."

"I don't want to hear what they say," she laughed.

"And I haven't the faintest intention of telling you."

"I don't think you are very amiable," she said, turning her shoulder to him.

Somehow the time did not seem very well chosen for the giving of Gilbert's message. Moreover, Maurice felt he had been rude and must try to atone as best he could.

"On second thoughts," he said, "I will be amiable and tell you, with a view to your future amendment. They say that you go about the earth, like a certain other enemy of mankind, seeking whom you may devour, and that you don't always stop to inquire whether you are poaching on other people's preserves. Grandfathers, fathers, husbands, brothers—they all go down before you, and naturally their owners don't like it."

Mrs. Dexterous looked him full in the face for a minute.

"And neither do their brothers' keepers, apparently," she said; but before he could answer, her white-whiskered neighbor, who had sufficiently recovered from his first shock to be courting another, addressed her with some pleasant, ponderous commonplace, and she turned away. Maurice began to talk to the little actress, whose cavalier was still dazedly absorbed by his admiration for Constance.

The air, warmed by the lights, was blown in little puffs by the women's fans. The servants passed swiftly to and fro, changing plates, pouring out champagne; a candle shade took fire and had to be seized and borne off by a stolid footman. Mr. Cacklethorpe was engaging the attention of Julia with a humorous story, the point of which had just slipped his memory. John Herbert was listening to and watching the lady of his unacknowledged affections. The fragments of talk pieced themselves together oddly.

"And I'd quite forgot my lines, you see," from the actress. "And as for my collar button, it was lost down my back, somehow," said Mr. Cacklethorpe, giving up the point of his story. "Nobody knows what she suffered with that man, my dear," his wife's voice could be heard. "And I couldn't but feel it was a dispensation of Providence when he had to be locked up." "But I had his hoofs cut off and mounted as inkstands for my most intimate friends," said the sporting lady. "And everyone in Paris knows how perfectly disreputable they are," exclaimed Marian's clear, loud voice. "Why, they dyed their hair red and took to skating in white velvet knickerbockers! Dear old Mr. Donaldson was so scandalized the first day he saw them that he could hardly take his eyes off them."

"Do you mean to say my father has taken to skating?" asked Maurice, in some surprise, addressing Mrs. Dexterous.

"Oh, no," she said, laughing. "He liked to go with me when I

skated at the *cercle*. We were great friends, your father and I. By the way, I had a letter from him the other day, and he spoke of coming over soon. He's the dearest old gentleman in the world, and I am devoted to him. You must be sure to ask me to come and dine with you the very first night he comes. I know he'd like it."

But Maurice, for once, was incapable of reply. An astounding thought had struck him. Could it be? Mrs. Cacklethorpe's gossip, which Constance had repeated to them as a good joke; the mysterious letter to Gilbert, the mere fact of his father's having written to Mrs. Dexterous—all these things flashed through his mind, and were dismissed as ridiculous and impossible. Still, old gentlemen did sometimes do astounding things.

When he recovered himself Mrs. Cacklethorpe was making the signal for departure, and the women gradually melted out of the room. Then he remembered that he had never given Gilbert's message, and supposed, with a sigh, that he must manage it later. He was among the first men to enter the drawing-room, and seeing the lady standing alone by the window, strolled up to her with such evident intention that the sporting gentleman, who greatly desired to talk to her, was reluctantly obliged to abandon his purpose. She turned as Maurice paused beside her, and looked at him in some astonishment, for she had expected the approaching steps to be those of John Herbert.

"I'm not going to stay," he said, laughing. "There are too many people in line, but I forgot at dinner to give you a forlorn message from my brother, who regrets extremely that he is obliged to go to town to-morrow and cannot go somewhere or do something delightful in your society."

"Oh," returned Mrs. Dexterous, frankly, "that's all right; we were only going to drive. There's a golf match at the club. Aren't you going?"

"I may," he answered. "It all

depends on—" he checked himself at the pronunciation of his lady's name, and before he could go on Marian interrupted him. She had seen Mr. Herbert stealthily working his way round to her by the four walls (he being in that state of lunacy when a circuitous manner of approach is believed to render the approacher all but invisible), and resolved to punish him for his tardiness and lack of spirit.

"If it depends upon me," she said, hastily. "I say the match, by all means. You *were* going to ask me, weren't you, dear Mr. Maurice? And you may feel quite free, as far as your house-party is concerned, for I know Miss Silverton is going with Mr. Herbert. He is quite attentive to her, isn't he? I wonder if he means business this time?"

If there were anyone who had reason *not* to wonder it was herself, seeing that the bewitched artist had been trembling on the verge of a passionate proposal to her three times that afternoon, but she felt that he was not quite ardent enough yet, and she knew very well that if one has a rival the part of wisdom is to force her companionship upon the gentleman one wishes to disenchant. So she lied boldly and trusted to her further ingenuity to arrange the second part of her plan.

"I'm afraid there is some mistake," said Maurice. "I am quite sure Miss Silverton promised to drive with me, otherwise, of course, I should be delighted to take my brother's place."

"Then that's an engagement," she cried, with a mischievous laugh. "You will find it is all arranged, dear Mr. Donaldson."

He gave her a polite but incredulous bow and took his departure as Herbert joined her.

"You were a long time in coming, my good friend," she observed, reproachfully. "If you had been a little quicker you might have saved me from rather an awkward predicament. Gilbert Donaldson cannot drive me to-morrow afternoon, and

Maurice said he should be delighted to take me if he thought you would look after Miss Silverton. I had to say something, so I answered I was sure you would."

"Maurice, too!" growled John Herbert. "By Jove, you're insatiable! Can't you even spare a man who is supposed to be just engaged?"

"I'm not so sure he is engaged. You wouldn't have thought so if you had heard us talking. These rumors about people sometimes have no foundation. Besides, what could I do! Cry out, 'No, you must go with your own fiancée; I want Mr. Herbert'—not knowing whether she *was* his fiancée, any more than I knew if—I wanted Mr. Herbert. I hope I am more discreet than that. Come, and we'll settle it with her now. She looks bored to death among those men. And then I shall slip away quietly. Shall I give you a lift home?"

She managed to pause just long enough by Julia's chair to arrange matters, giving the impression that Maurice was rather under obligations to drive her—as indeed he was, though not of his own seeking—and then disappeared, taking the artist with her.

Her departure stirred the surface of conversation a little, and the party soon afterward broke up, to the joy of stiff coachmen and stamping horses.

"What did Mrs. Dexterous say to you about to-morrow, Julia?" asked Maurice, as they were driving home. "I felt mischief in the air."

"She told me more or less plainly that she wanted to go with you," returned Miss Silverton, "but she wanted me to imagine something very different."

"Well, I haven't the faintest intention of going with her. I am driving with you."

"Oh, you'd much better," said Julia, not sorry to show Constance her superior methods. "It's all arranged now, and I've promised to go with Mr. Herbert."

All the same, she felt a little more tired in body and spirit than she could account for. She said she was sleepy and settled herself back in her corner

with closed eyes, but somehow under the lids danced little pictures of Maurice at table with Mrs. Dexterous, Maurice talking to her again after dinner, and Maurice as he might look talking to her when Julia was not observing them. Nobody spoke until the carriage stopped at the door. The correct Puffles stood in the hall ready to receive them.

"You do look sleepy," said Maurice, as he helped Julia out. "And I fancy you are cold, too. That is an absurd little garment to be out in on an Autumn night. Come into the library, by the fire, and have a glass of sherry or something. Puffles, bring some sherry or port for Miss Silverton. What are you going to have, Constance?"

Constance yawned. "I'm not going to sit up and chaperon you two," she said; "I am going straight to bed. Good-night, Julia, and remember, I don't approve of ignoring things."

"What on earth is she talking about?" asked Maurice.

"Oh, it isn't anything. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters but our liking each other," exclaimed Julia, patting his shoulder as he poured out her port. "I didn't care much for the dinner to-night; did you, Maurice?"

"Care for it!" he echoed. "I thought it was the most infernal evening I ever spent."

And so are we rewarded for entertaining our friends; but Julia went off to bed feeling distinctly comforted, and her dreams were of pleasant things.

Maurice, on the contrary, saw his father skating vigorously round and round the *cercle* after Mrs. Dexterous, who was following John Herbert, while Gilbert pursued Mr. Donaldson and Maurice pursued Gilbert.

He was careful, however, to say nothing about either his dreams or his suspicions to his brother next day. The thing was preposterous.

Constance, having, perhaps, some inkling of her husband's reason for flying to town, resolutely opposed it, and rather than quarrel with her again he permitted himself to be absolutely

flaunted in the face of Mrs. Dexterous and the public. But he must have made explanations of a kind in private, for the lady was not less gracious than usual when they met at the golf match, and only asked him when he *did* go to town if he would be so good as to bring her a certain new kind of bit she saw advertised, warranted to control the most confirmed runaway.

So things went on peacefully enough for the next few days. The sun shone, and the wind blew, and the trees turned red, and people walked and talked, and abused each other for distinctive virtues and found excuses for mutual faults, and dined together, and commented on the dinners, and told all the funny little stories they knew about the diners. Mrs. Cacklethorpe said that it was the very pleasantest Autumn she had spent at Meadowford. Not one single scandal, my dear, and everybody out in the open air all day, which was so healthy. Of course, one couldn't help noticin' that Marian Dexterous was settin' her cap for the other Donaldson, and, mark her words, that would be the next gossip. Which, if her words were marked, was true enough. As a matter of fact, Maurice, haunted by occasional filial fears, did study Mrs. Dexterous more or less attentively from different points of view. Julia didn't quite like it, but convinced, as she could not help being, of his love for herself, she resolved to conceal the surprise that even his spasmodic interest in Marian occasioned her. She was a person of resources, too, and though she knew she could never rival Mrs. Dexterous in the hunting-field, she was aware that to teach a pretty, clever woman anything is far from disagreeable to a man, so she sent for her habit and announced her intention of riding with Maurice, if he did not mind giving her the benefit of his instruction on the off days. She did not consider it necessary to mention the extent of her experience, which, although not great—for she was timid with horses—was enough to raise her above the average, and on the first occasion of

their going out together he was enchanted by her pluck and progress.

"Why, you will be cutting down the field in no time, Julia," he said, with pride. "I'll tell you what, Gilbert won't be riding to-morrow—he's going to town—and he shall lend you The Prophet. He's steady as a church and doesn't pull an ounce, and we will go out and lark a bit in the afternoon, and I'll give you a lesson in jumping."

Inwardly alarmed, but outwardly as bold as a lion, Julia said that nothing would give her more pleasure, and scanned the sky anxiously in search of some promise of stormy weather. She had not prepared herself to go to quite such lengths as leaping for a lover, but she was determined not to falter now.

"The Prophet is a pretty big beast," she said, dubiously. "I suppose I shall feel as if I were flying over the moon. I hope I can manage him."

"Finest sensation in the world. You'll love it," mumbled Maurice, who was lighting a cigarette. "And you'll look awfully well on him, my pretty little lady."

"I'd ride a griffin if you said that to me, dear," said Julia, demurely.

"But if you knew how much I want to kiss you when you say those things you'd be more careful on the public highway," replied Maurice; and so they rode home in great peace and amity with themselves and all the world, though Julia felt many misgivings and sudden faintings of the heart whenever she thought of the expedition to which she was committed.

Fate, however, intervened in her behalf, for, although the weather was fair, Gilbert in town and The Prophet at her disposal, Maurice himself was obliged to cry off. He had received, he told her in the course of the morning, a telephone message from the club demanding his presence at a special meeting for the disciplining of a certain refractory member, and as the refractory one was a friend of his—a mere boy, whom he considered more sinned against than sinning—

he wished to be present to see fair play.

Julia heartily agreed, and came out on the steps after luncheon to wave him a forgiving and relieved farewell as the Hempstead cart disappeared out of the gate. Constance and she took the dogs for a walk and returned about four o'clock, to find that Mrs. Cacklethorpe, Mrs. Bramble, Mrs. Bramble's pretty daughter, Rose, and two or three men had driven over to tea.

Everybody was in good spirits, including the dogs, that stood on each side of Mrs. Donaldson, barking for biscuits in the most engaging way.

"And so you have been for a walk, Miss Silvertown?" said Mrs. Cacklethorpe. "You ought to ride, you know; great thing for keepin' young, they say, not that you need trouble about that for some time yet, but all the girls ride here. It's the only way they can see the men. Yes."

"We have managed to see several by staying at home," answered Julia, good-humoredly. Mrs. Cacklethorpe always amused her. "But as it happens, I had been going to ride this afternoon, only Mr. Donaldson was obliged to go to some meeting of the Meadowford Club. Now you see how fortunate it is, for I am not missing your visit."

But by this time Mrs. Cacklethorpe's eyes were wandering about the room, and she did not appear to have heard the compliment.

"My dear," she said in a loud whisper to Mrs. Bramble, "why don't you marry your girl to young Mongoose there—an only son? Father dead. Money secure. Mother a handsome woman, who may marry again any day. Stories about her? Well, yes, of course, but you could afford to ignore them."

Mrs. Bramble's sharp little nose went up in the air.

"I'm in no haste to marry my daughter to anybody, Mrs. Cacklethorpe," she said. "I am not in favor of early marriages. I think girls improve by being kept under home influence as long as possible. Not

even brought out, you know, until they are quite mature."

"Well, my dear," returned that lady, "you may be right. But I tried that plan with an English waterproof I once bought, and it didn't do. I kep' it and kep' it and kep' it, and when I took it out it all went to splits. I wouldn't answer for it that girls mightn't do the same."

Julia fell into such ill-concealed fits of laughter at this that she was obliged to get up and join Miss Bramble and Mr. Mongoose at the window. They were discussing whether a brown spot above the trees was or was not the observatory on the top of Scrabble Hill. The two other men were drawn into the argument, and Constance was appealed to for field-glasses. She provided some old ones from the hall table and then recollected that she had given Gilbert a beautiful new pair—the very latest thing in field-glasses—for his birthday, and went out of the room to fetch them.

When she came back the whole party was assembled at the window, greatly interested in the evolutions of two horsemen, or rather a horseman and a horsewoman (as described by Mr. Mongoose, who happened to have the glasses), who were apparently riding a race across country.

"Can't you see yet who they are?" cried Mrs. Cacklethorpe.

Constance raised the more powerful glasses to her own eyes. "It's Gilbert," she said, in a low, angry voice to Julia, who stood beside her. "Gilbert and Marian. I suppose he had his horse sent to the station to meet him, and then joined her somewhere. It is really too much, but she will be sorry for it, and so will he."

"They are coming awfully fast, whoever they are," said Mr. Mongoose. "I almost think the lady's horse is running away."

"She's down!" cried Constance. "She's down! What an awful-looking fall! Is the horse up? Oh, I hope she isn't hurt!"

"How did it happen?" "Do you know who it is?" "How far off are

they?" "Send my carriage." A perfect babel of voices broke out.

"I'm afraid it's Mrs. Dexterous. Her horse fell at a fence. They were coming too fast, as Mr. Mongoose says—I think she is up again, but I'm afraid she must be hurt. If you will allow me, Mrs. Bramble, I'll send your carriage. I think they are pretty near the station road."

"There's somebody driving along in a Hempstead cart," said Julia, who had picked up the glasses. "It must be Maurice. There! He's stopped, and they are walking across the fields to him; she can't be much hurt, after all. I am so glad!"

"The groom's got out and she's got in," said Mr. Mongoose, continuing in a serial manner. "And the groom is going to lead her horse home. The man who was riding with her is coming along again across country. Jove, he can ride!" And the young gentleman stood silent in admiration.

"Well, I think we ought to be going, Mrs. Donaldson," said Mrs. Bramble. "I hope we shall find the accident has not been serious. Very likely we may meet them on the road and I may be able to find out about it."

"My dear, I'm not goin' just yet," declared Mrs. Cacklethorpe. "There's no tellin' what has happened, and it's better to be on the spot, and then you know the truth of it if anybody asks you. They are comin' this way, aren't they?" she anxiously inquired of Mr. Mongoose.

"The cart is hidden by the woods," he said, "but the man on horseback turned in at this gate."

As he spoke, hasty steps crossed the piazza, and Maurice Donaldson entered the room; he had evidently been riding fast and furiously.

"I wish you would telephone for the doctor, Constance," he said. "Mrs. Dexterous has had a fall. I think she is only badly shaken, but one never can tell, and it's safer to have Wise's opinion."

"I'll tell him to come *here*, I suppose," said Constance, quietly. She

was invaluable in all emergencies and never asked unnecessary questions.

"Yes," he returned. "Gilbert is driving her here."

He was so occupied in answering the eager questions put to him that he hardly noticed the fact that Julia neither spoke nor looked at him.

But Mrs. Cacklethorpe noticed, and did not need to guess the reason.

III

MRS. DEXTEROUS's fall, being followed by no serious consequences to herself, soon ceased to be the subject of gossip in Meadowford. For when, as was the case with the curse of the Jackdaw of Rheims, "nobody seems one penny the worse" for an accident, people soon lose interest in discussing it. But it had not been without effect on the Donaldson household. Julia, clinging resolutely to her principles, had asked no explanation from Maurice, but Constance soon wrung from the reluctant Gilbert an admission that he had ordered his horse to meet him at the club, and had driven there from the station for the purpose of riding with Marian. He had, in obedience to orders, brought her down a new bit that she was anxious to try on a pulling horse, but being himself in great pain and half-blinded by a cinder that had got into his eye on the way down, he had later, finding Maurice at the club, begged his brother to keep the engagement for him, and driven at once to the doctor's. This seemed simple and natural enough. Gilbert was incapacitated, and since the lady insisted on riding a dangerous horse, it appeared to be the duty of a man and a brother to get into such riding clothes as he kept on the spot, and do his best to look after her.

The bit had not proved much of a success; the horse had got out of her hand and had given her a rattling fall. That was all there was to it. Julia understood perfectly, of course. No one could help understanding how it happened.

All the same, Julia wished she had been less confidential to Mrs. Cacklethorpe that afternoon. It gave her an uncomfortable feeling every time she thought about it and remembered that lady's half-amused, half-pitying look when Maurice came in.

She had ridden only once since that day. He said his nerve was shaken, and he would not have her risk her neck riding across country, and she thought he could not enjoy just pottering about among the lanes. So the rides were discontinued, and Miss Silvertown was embarrassed by no further offers of a mount on The Prophet, about which she had her own thoughts.

Constance noticed that both Maurice and Gilbert seemed preoccupied and held frequent consultations. She questioned her husband, but for once that easy-going person was discreet and kept his own counsel.

"It would never do to show Constance the letter I got from Alice the other day," he said. "She'd be for locking up the old gentleman at once, or doing something very decided. I'm all for peace and persuasion. I don't think he'll really do it."

"And I don't see that we can possibly interfere if he does," returned Maurice. "If he chooses to marry a young woman, and she chooses to accept him, what are we to do about it? He's quite independent of us."

"And we are quite independent of him, thank heaven!" said Gilbert, piously. "But no man likes to have his father make a fool of himself at the ripe age of seventy, especially when he has lived until then a godly, righteous and sober life, respected by all who know him. Hang it all! I feel I *must* remonstrate with him, talk to him like—like an uncle, you know."

Maurice laughed. "It wasn't so long ago that Constance was talking to you on the same subject."

"But not like an uncle," observed Gilbert. "I'm afraid the fact of her being a woman and my wife interfered a little with the exercise of that calm judgment which should be

brought to bear on an affair of this kind. I say, Maurice, I don't believe Mrs. D. would do it, even if the governor means business. I don't think she is that kind. What do you think?"

"It depends a good deal on what you mean by 'that kind.'"

"Why, the kind of young woman who marries an old man for money."

"Oh!" said Maurice. "Well, there seem to be a good many subdivisions of even that kind, and I'm not prepared to say. Let me see Alice's letter again. I wonder why she sent it to the club."

"I wonder why, too. If I hadn't happened to go to town that day I should not have got it at all, most likely. At any rate, not before he landed."

"I don't suppose it would have made much difference," said Maurice, reading:

MY DEAR GILBERT:

Papa has suddenly announced his intention of sailing on the 9th. He refuses to take me with him, pleading the suddenness of the start and the shortness of his probable stay. He says it is business of a private and important nature, but I heard him tell old General Blunderbuss (with whom he is more confidential than he is with me) that "one could not be too careful in dealing with a woman whose reputation might suffer forever if one made a mistake." You know how chivalrous the dear old gentleman is, and, remembering the great admiration he had for her when she was in Paris, and what rumors were started at the time, I cannot help fearing that he has determined to marry Marian Dexterous, and is following her to America for the purpose of proposing to her. What can be done? Would she accept him, do you think? The whole thing is most distasteful to me, and would be unfortunate in many ways for all of us. I suppose we cannot prevent it if he has made up his mind and she chooses to say "Yes," but if you find any opportunity—where it would not do more harm than good—try to dissuade him. You may imagine how anxious I am. He has been in a perfect fever to get off ever since he received a letter from Constance telling us all the news of Meadowford. He was awfully pleased at the idea of Maurice's probable engagement to that pretty Miss

Silverton, and said her father had been one of his oldest friends, but that is evidently not the cause of this hurried visit—

"Well," said Maurice, folding up the letter and returning it to his brother, "as I said before, there is nothing to be done but to wait developments. And in spite of all this, I *cannot* believe that my father wants to marry Mrs. Dexterous, nor she him. It's too ridiculous."

"I don't know; he's a devilish fine-looking old gentleman, and well supplied with this world's goods."

"Not as well as he was before he divided things among us," said Maurice.

"But she mayn't know that," suggested Gilbert. "We might drop a hint to Mrs. Cacklethorpe. Something about an indigent parent, you know. Or you might go in and cut him out before he arrives. Let me see, he left on the 9th. That was—why, he'll be here directly. He ought to arrive next Saturday."

"I'm afraid that won't give me time enough," answered Maurice, dryly. "Throw me a cigarette, will you? I have left my case up stairs."

"Where are you going?" asked Gilbert, as his brother left the room.

"To see if I can find Julia. This is too good a day to waste in the house," returned Maurice, and whistling to the dogs, he departed.

But Julia was not to be found easily. He made a tour of the downstairs rooms; he interviewed her maid, whom he happened to meet in the hall; he walked through the conservatory, and was just starting down the steps to the garden when he met William, the footman, coming up with some late flowers and Autumn leaves that he had been collecting for table decoration, and on making inquiries from him learned that Miss Silverton had left the house some minutes since, alone, to the best of William's knowledge and belief, and going, as he imagined, for a walk.

Maurice informed himself of the direction she had taken and sauntered

after her. He wondered why she had not waited a little longer, or sent word to him, if she had been in a hurry to start. They had not exactly made an engagement, but they had spoken of walking after luncheon. "One can never be too particular when one's business is a woman," thought Maurice, turning down the road to the left, as he conjectured, from certain little heel marks in the stiffened mud at the side, that Julia must have done. The sun was still warm and the air soft, the green fir trees began to show conspicuously among the yellowing birches and liquid ambers, and all the distances were veiled in a blue and purple haze. Maurice threw away the end of his cigarette and stopped to light a pipe, and the dogs scrambled up the bank and chased imaginary small game among the dead leaves.

Resuming his line of march again more briskly, Mr. Donaldson came round a corner to a place where he could command a long stretch of road, and where his eyes expected to light on the slim figure of his ladylove tripping along at no very great distance ahead of him, but, somewhat to his astonishment, no such figure was to be seen. "She can't have got so far off if she only left the house a few minutes before I did," he said to himself. "The earth must have opened and swallowed her up," and then a sudden sharp stab went through his heart as it struck him that the sentence would only be true when she was dead—his pretty, gentle little lady, whom he loved tenderly and passionately, and in all the ways a man should love a woman. He put the thought away from him with a mental shudder, and strode on quickly, but with no particular purpose. You cannot follow a lady as the King followed Madame Blaise unless she has walked before, and he began to think William had been misguiding him, that, whatever direction Julia had taken, it was not this one.

Far down ahead of him he saw the cottage at the crossroads, and he wondered how Herbert liked his quarters, and whether he had done anything in

the way of alteration. It might not be a bad plan if Julia and he owned such a little house for the Spring and Autumn. How amusing it would be to keep house with Julia! She would affect such a charming simplicity about the ordinary commonplaces of daily life. She would make such nice little stories out of her own mistakes, and insist so strenuously on being praised for her good intentions. A reasonable woman pretending to be unreasonable is a most entrancing companion. He had watched her at dinner the night before, talking to Herbert. She had such a pretty, quiet way of speaking. She permitted herself no mannerisms of facial expression when she talked, as so many women—even handsome women like his neighbor, Marian Dexterous—did, and he had thought her by far the most charming person he had ever seen, the one who best satisfied his taste. He had said so to Mrs. Dexterous—(why did people *always* put him next to her at dinners now?)—who at once agreed, with suspicious cordiality, and he had tried to tell Julia herself, later, something of the way he felt, poor as words were to express it, but she had seemed less responsive than usual. And then Gilbert had come in and interrupted them. That was rather funny. He smiled involuntarily as he remembered. They had been standing in front of the fire, and just as he had begun to make Julia smile that nice, demure little smile of hers at some of the things he was saying, Gilbert had come hastily into the room, exclaiming, "I say, Maurice, I must speak to you seriously about this affair of Mrs. Dexterous's—" and had stopped short, with his mouth open in surprise, on finding that his brother was not alone. Discretion was not Gilbert's strong point, and if rumors of his father's infatuation for the handsome widow did not get about, it would not be his fault. Not that it made any difference if Julia knew; he had half a mind to tell her himself, only it did not seem quite fair.

He had reached this point in his meditations when he suddenly became

aware that two people had come out of the cottage, which by that time he had nearly reached, and were rapidly approaching him. One of them was John Herbert and the other Julia.

Maurice was taken by surprise for an instant, but only for an instant.

"You have stolen my lady, Herbert," he said, as they met, "and I am in hot pursuit. I was under the impression that Miss Silverton was going to walk with me this afternoon."

"And Miss Silverton has been to see Mr. Herbert's pictures instead," answered Julia. "A private exhibition, especially for her; and very beautiful they are. But I don't think we made any positive engagement to walk, did we?" she asked, looking at Maurice for the first time, and appearing, he thought, a little less at her ease than usual.

"Won't you both come back, and we will appease Donaldson with strong drink, while your old friend, Mrs. Minching, the housekeeper, will give you and me some afternoon tea?" suggested Mr. Herbert.

"I'm afraid I must not stop for that," said Miss Silverton, "especially as strong drink is not one of Mr. Donaldson's weaknesses, and therefore we could not appease him in that way. If he is really angry I had better let him take me home at once. I suppose he feels responsible to his sister-in-law for my safe conduct. Good-bye, Mr. Herbert; thank you so much!"

Mr. Herbert laughed at this sudden dismissal, lifted his cap from his red crest of hair and turned away, but the next instant Julia's voice called after him:

"You'll work at once on the particular picture I like, won't you?"

"On Friday," he answered, laughing again, "please the gods."

Maurice and his companion walked on together in silence for some minutes. The pink glow of the sunset was on their faces, but the air had grown sharper, and Julia shivered.

"I ought to have taken off my jacket while I was looking at the

pictures," she said. "I was too hot then, and now I am too cold."

"It would have been wiser," returned Maurice, agreeably. "Were you amused? Did he show you pretty things and tell you nice stories?"

"You talk as if I were a little girl," observed Miss Silverton, sweetly.

"And so you are, the nicest little girl in the world—only I don't think you ought to let your particular play-fellow wander about alone this lovely afternoon, while you flirt in corners with attractive artists."

Julia looked up at him. She would like to have exclaimed, with *Carmen*, "*Que je meure si tu n'es pas jaloux!*" But there was no trace of anything approaching jealousy to be seen upon Mr. Donaldson's impressive face.

"We talked only of paintings," she said, indifferently, "and did not flirt at all. He is always my very good friend."

"With a man like Herbert the very-good-friend stage either precedes or follows the other. Let us strike out the 'always,' and as for flirting, you know, Julia, that *we* have flirted when discussing subjects far less romantic than painting."

"Such as what, for instance?" inquired Miss Silverton, with languid curiosity. She was getting rather angry, though she could not show it.

"Well, *buttons* was the last subject that we discussed flirtatiously," said Maurice, with an air of interested recollection.

"Buttons!" echoed Julia. "What are you talking about?"

"Yes. At least, I believe it was not a button after all, but a sleeve-link. Don't you remember? We were sitting on the sofa, and in moving a cushion behind you—I believe I am correct in saying that I was moving the cushion—my sleeve-link caught in the lace of your waist, and I said (what I did does not matter), 'That would be difficult to explain if anyone came in suddenly,' and you said, 'Yes, difficult to explain, but not hard to understand.' You said it so nicely! I love the way you say

things and the way you look when you say them."

The ways Miss Silverton looked at that moment were too many and various to be followed by a mere man. She was puzzled, uneasy, indignant and, in spite of herself, a little amused, all at the same time. She had gone to the studio according to an appointment made with Mr. Herbert at dinner, when she had been particularly exasperated by the conduct of affairs opposite. Later, Gilbert's unfortunate remark had not tended to smooth matters, and it was with the most deliberately malicious intentions that she had set out that afternoon. Constance, who was to have accompanied her, being detained at the last moment, she had gone alone. She had expressed admiration judiciously, she had recalled old days with just the proper undercurrent of suppressed regret, she had promised to sit for her picture again—those last sittings which he reminded her were still his to claim—in fact, she had flirted abominably, and therefore felt quite pleasantly excited and guilty when she so suddenly came face to face with Maurice in the road. She had been ready to refuse explanations, and he had asked for none. She had been prepared to defend herself, and he had given her no chance. She had meant to be indifferent and rather cold, and he reminded her of an incident which, while mischievously emphasizing their serious relations, could not be taken seriously. He was certainly very clever, was Maurice, and so she allowed the corner of her mouth to curve a little—the corner which was farthest from him.

"I am glad my expression is satisfactory," she said, serenely. "I am very fortunate to be able to please you, with so little trouble to myself."

"Oh, I dare say you will have trouble enough before you have done with it," returned Mr. Donaldson, impersonally. "I am very hard to please on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays."

Julia laughed outright. "And this is Wednesday," she said. "What a

remarkable coincidence it would be if I had happened not to please you today!"

"Oh, but you have. Your delightfully dignified, demure, frightened, guilty yet triumphant expression when I met you with Herbert just now was a sight for the gods. You couldn't do anything like anybody else in the world, could you, my sweetheart? You knew you had been naughty, and you meant to be naughtier, and at first you were afraid I should notice it too much, and then you were afraid I was not going to notice it at all, and now——"

"And now," cried Julia, highly incensed, "I am afraid that I shall lose my temper if we discuss the matter any further. Upon my word! when it comes to noticing things I think you had better extend the same latitude to my conduct that I do to yours."

"An implied accusation," exclaimed Maurice, with satisfaction. "I was hoping it might come to that. Now we shall know where we stand. And what do you observe about my conduct that does not please your majesty?"

"Nothing," returned Miss Silverton, hastily, seeing herself almost entrapped into the admission of having remarked a state of affairs that she had determined to ignore. "Nothing. And therefore, as I find no fault with your behavior, I trust that you will save yourself the trouble of finding fault with mine."

"Don't mention it," said Maurice; "it's a pleasure to find fault with you. You have no idea how meekness becomes you."

"I never felt less meek in my life!" flashed out Julia.

"And yet you look perfectly cowed," returned Mr. Donaldson, looking at her critically. "Almost as if you were going to cry."

"Maurice!" cried his exasperated ladylove, "if you are trying to provoke me, for some purpose of your own, you are succeeding beyond your wildest expectations."

"And you did not set out to provoke me for some purpose of your

own, did you, you patient Griselda?" he said, laughing. "Oh, my dearest, when you know how I love you, why do you want to wound me, even with pin-pricks? I am not jealous of Herbert, but I hate it that you should wish me to be. It is not necessary. I love you quite enough as it is, and I think you know it, don't you?"

"I have had reason to be less certain, perhaps, lately," murmured Julia.

Maurice put a peremptory hand on her arm and stopped her short in the middle of the road. He looked very stern and determined.

"Take that back, Julia," he said, roughly. "You know it is absurd. As a joke it was all very well, but this is serious, now. I am in earnest. Do you really believe in your heart that I could care for anyone but you?"

She considered for a moment, with lowered eyes and a heightened color. Then she looked up at him frankly. "No," she said, "I do not, really, in my heart, but my head has been getting a little bewildered. One sees things and hears things and—and—" The rest was inaudible except for the words "Marian Dexterous" and "they said" and "everybody seemed to think," and even these were somewhat muffled by being breathed against the sleeve of his coat. Fortunately, the twilight had fallen over the face of the world.

"You are certainly the sweetest little lady that ever lived!" declared Maurice to the four winds of heaven, "but you are not easy to manage."

"I am afraid I am more of a trouble than a pleasure to you," returned Miss Silverton, shaking her head sadly.

"Trouble!" he echoed. "I should think you are! You need not think you are a pleasure. You are hard work."

"Well, we know the back is fitted to the burden," said Julia, laughing as she ran up the steps and into the house. She sang a great deal as she dressed for dinner and determined that she would give her portrait when finished to Maurice for a Christmas

present, thus gratifying everybody—herself in the posing, John Herbert in the painting and Maurice in the receiving—and turning a mistake to good account.

She believed that in a way Mr. Herbert was still fond of her. He sought her out in public, and his manner in private was that of one who suppresses tenderness. He had seemed almost on the point of an explanation of some sort that very afternoon. She imagined that he more than suspected her engagement to Maurice, and wondered if it had in any way revived his old feelings for her. "Those things sometimes happen," thought Julia, sagely. Of course, she had heard of his affair with the all-powerful Mrs. Dexterous, but for some reason or other—perhaps because it was a very real affair of its kind—it had not excited much comment at Meadowford. Rumor, which had remarked the fact every time Gilbert Donaldson talked to Mrs. Dexterous or Maurice rode with her, had been silent about the artist's twilight and evening visits to the cottage where she lived with an elderly cousin to play propriety; but, on the contrary, it had been most active in connecting Julia's name with that of Mr. Herbert because he and she talked to each other openly and as if they liked it.

Nevertheless, that very afternoon, could Miss Silverton only have known it, the artist had been on the point of confessing to her—having got past the stage of ostentatious concealment to that of maudlin garrulity—his passion for Mrs. Dexterous and his hopes that she was not indifferent to it.

Although Julia was not vain, the confession would have surprised her not a little. She was quite ready to doubt Maurice's love, because it was so important to her, but John Herbert's half-friendly affection she had taken for granted, because it did not count any longer. Nothing really counted but Maurice, and though, of course, no woman could possibly object to being admired and immortalized by a

great artist, who did not generally paint portraits, it behooved one to be discreet in flirting with him. Not that she made any resolutions on the subject. She was discouraged about resolutions after her lamentable failure of the afternoon, she who had loftily boasted to Constance of her inability to understand jealousy, and had proudly said, "I should ignore it if I were you," on the occasion when Gilbert and Mrs. Dexterous were in question. "Oh, well, I wasn't really jealous," thought Julia. "Not jealous, only annoyed, and I *should* have ignored it if Maurice had not been so clever. By the way, he never denied anything. I suppose it was hardly worth while when there was nothing to deny, but it would have been more courteous—and perhaps less wise. He is wise, and I know he really does love me dearly, and I snap my fingers at Marian Dexterous. Let her tumble over fences and sit next to him at dinners as often as she pleases. She is a great, handsome, obvious piece of humanity, and I don't know why I gave her a second thought, except that gossip would keep saying how attracted Maurice was by her. As if a man like Maurice could be! Still," with sudden humility, "what attracts one man attracts many, and she is awfully good to look at. Much better looking than I am, though not perhaps so pleasant," concluded Miss Silverton, smiling at herself in the glass.

She was as good as an angel all that evening and the next day, as amusing, ingenuous and charming as any lady could be.

"It is because you found fault with me," she told Maurice. "I am as likely as not to be good for a week now."

"If you are going to be any better than you have been," he returned, "I must really cut the long feathers in your wings."

It was perhaps partly owing to the neglect of this precaution that she managed to make her escape unnoticed on Friday afternoon to Mr. Herbert's studio, accompanied by her

maid and a box containing a wonderful bronze-colored velvet dress.

She had almost made up her mind not to go, to send a polite little note excusing herself, and stay contentedly idling with Maurice instead, but to her surprise he had not seemed inclined to idle. A letter he received at luncheon had appeared to be of sufficient importance to require an immediate answer, and after that meal he had disappeared with Gilbert. Constance had a headache and was shut up in her room, and Julia's flight had been so particularly easy that it lost all interest.

"This is very tame," she said, plaintively, as Mr. Herbert received her at the door. "I had hoped to make use of all my diplomacy in arriving here unsuspected. We agreed not to publish our proceedings to the world, didn't we? But nobody has asked me a single question, and here I am."

"I have been more fortunate," he answered, laughing. "I have had to tell at least two distinct falsehoods on the occasion, both to the same person. Mrs. Dexterous asked me last night what I was doing this afternoon, and I said I could not tell—I might be painting, miles from here, or I might be going to town. And she asked me, if I went, to bring her a book she wanted, and I said I would, so I have had to send my man for it."

"Well, that seems more satisfactory," said Julia, who little knew how much Mr. Herbert would have begrudged the afternoon had he not had the prospect of an evening in the society of the Circe who had bewitched him.

John Herbert's studio was a small, bare room on the ground floor which had once served as a "sitting-room" to the inhabitants of the farm-house. It had a funny little old wooden mantelpiece, painted a dull yellow, and the walls were covered with a gray-green paper that absorbed most of the light which the little windows used to let in, and a good deal of that which streamed from the large one, ceiling-high, which had been cut between

them. A divan occupied one corner, and a very large, worn, green leather easy-chair pranced into the middle of the room. Easels and little painting-tables stood about, and canvases leaned against the wall in layers. Julia sat in state upon an old carved chair mounted on four claret boxes, and thought how amusing it all was.

"I like it better than your old studio," she said; "that was so formal it filled one with awe, and so cold that it sent shivers down one's back."

"I don't think you were much awestruck. Do you remember the day you put excelsior whiskers round the face of my beautiful tall clock and dressed it in a soft hat and an old cloak, just as Mrs. Hamet Nailer, of Chicago, and her husband were about to inspect my famous picture, 'The Hillside?'"

"Well, well, they bought it, just the same; it would have taken more than a clock to stop them after they heard the price. They knew it must be good when they found what it was going to cost them. They were quite ugly enough, too, to have stopped the clock forever if I had not hidden its face."

"That view of it entirely escaped me," said John Herbert, shaking back his red wave of hair. "Your head a little more that way, if you please. You have the dearest little shadow at the corner of your mouth. I like you much better than my landscapes."

"You did not always," remarked Julia, deepening the shadow with a smile.

"Oh, didn't I? I thought that was the very reason— Well, never mind. I was exceedingly in love with you, all the same."

"Your salad days, when you were green in judgment!" As a matter of fact, I am a great deal nicer now," said Miss Silverton, confidentially.

"Don't be any nicer," he entreated. "I assure you it would be most imprudent on your part. I am just trembling on the verge of confiding my heart's secrets to you this minute. Don't smile like that. It is inhuman, and I cannot paint it. And this must

be a masterpiece. Why didn't I stick to my first start in my trade? I really think I might have made a success of portraits. Only most people would have bored me so."

Julia did not answer, and he worked in silence for a few minutes.

"That is a ripping color, that dress," he observed, presently.

"It is the same one I sat to you in before. A velvet dress takes a long time to wear out, and a picture dress is never out of fashion. I hope to keep it for the next five years. It is a great favorite of mine."

"I must have some relief for all that bronze-copper coloring, though," screwing up his eyes and stepping back to look at her. "You have not a piece of fur with you, or an opera cloak, or something?"

"I have all sorts of things at the house," she answered. "Shall I send Lucinda to make a selection? It won't take her long to get there and back."

So Lucinda was despatched for the articles decided on, and went off rather sulkily, for she hated walking, except on dry pavements, with a line of attractive shop-windows on either side of her.

For a long time Julia posed and he painted in silence, then he put down his palette.

"Do you want to hear my heart's secrets? I mean—would it bore you to hear them?" he asked, suddenly, with a nervous laugh. "Don't say it would."

Julia looked up, startled. "I hope they are not very desperate," she said.

"No, only I am really head and ears in love this time," he answered, throwing down his brushes and approaching her. "I suppose no fool was *ever* as much in love as I am, and I can't keep it to myself another minute."

"You—you—do you think you are wise to tell me?" stammered Julia.

"I dare say I am not at all wise, but I know I cannot help it," he returned, striding up and down the room with his hands in his pock-

ets and a most determined expression on his face. "Great heavens! there is Mrs. Dexterous at the gate! And I have sent my man off. Excuse me while I rout out Mrs. Minching to answer the bell, or questions, or whatever is necessary. I suppose I had better not show up, as I am supposed to be in town."

"She won't be likely to come in," said Julia after him, reassuringly.

But that, it appeared, was just what Mrs. Dexterous intended to do.

"I know Mr. Herbert is away," Julia heard her say, "but he has given me permission to come and see his pictures whenever I please, and I am going to meet a friend here this afternoon. I suppose I may go to the studio."

Julia sprang off the model-stand. "I am afraid we are discovered," she said, as John Herbert returned to her side. "Isn't it provoking!"

But it was a good deal more than provoking to hear the well-known tones of Mrs. Cacklethorpe's voice drowning those of Mrs. Dexterous at the front door.

"Just wait for me, my dear," she was exclaiming. "I saw you goin' up the path, and I stopped the carriage and got out. Who was that woman you were speakin' to in the lane? Now, I'll tell you what I want. I want to see John Herbert's pictures. People are always askin' me what I think of them, now he is down here, you know, and it is nice to be able to say I have seen them. Yes. You can take me in, can't you? You know him so well."

"I'm afraid I can't, to-day," said Marian's voice. "He is not here."

"Well, my dear, the pictures are, if he is not," returned the determined lady. "I don't see but what it is the best time to go. You don't have to say anything but what you really think, you know."

"This is too much," cried Julia. "Can't I—not hide, exactly—but efface myself for a few minutes until they have gone? Can't I go in there?" She indicated a little cupboard of a room on the right, where she had

changed her dress when she first came in. "If Mrs. Cacklethorpe sees me, all Meadowford will ring with the news to-morrow!"

"The devil fly away with her!" exclaimed Mr. Herbert, taking the portrait off the easel. "I will do my best. Perhaps they won't stay long. Confound it all, why did this happen to-day?"

Julia disappeared, and the door had hardly shut upon her when Mrs. Cacklethorpe and Mrs. Dexterous entered the room, followed by the protesting Mrs. Minching, whose very cap-strings stood out with horror at this intrusion on her master's privacy.

"Why, we thought you were out, Mr. Herbert," said Mrs. Cacklethorpe. "Didn't you say he was out, Mrs. Dexterous? Yes. Well, I hope you don't mind our lookin' about a little. I am so anxious to see your pictures, you know. You celebrated men can't hope to escape notice."

"So it seems, Mrs. Cacklethorpe," answered the artist, with grim politeness. "It is almost embarrassing at times. Yes, I told Mrs. Dexterous that I might be going to town to-day, but I changed my mind, and set to work to finish a picture. If you feel in a criticising mood you might tell me what you think of it."

He placed a very much smudged oil study of a full moon, some clouds and a dismal pond upside down on the easel, and watched the lady's face as she surveyed it. He had tried in vain to exchange glances with Marian; she steadily avoided looking in his direction, and wandered about the room in a way that made him exceedingly uneasy.

"Now, do you call that an especially fine thing?" asked the bewildered Mrs. Cacklethorpe, after trying unsuccessfully to make out the subject of the painting before her. "One of your best, I mean? It does not seem quite clear——"

"No," said Mr. Herbert, gravely, turning it right side up, "it is not very clear. There's a storm coming up in the right-hand corner. You can see it better, perhaps, this way.

No, it is not one of my best, though it is very fine." He searched among his canvases and placed three or four more finished studies before her. "Those are about all I have to show, I am afraid," he said. "I have not been working much lately."

"Do you sit in a carved chair, mounted on—what are they?—*boxes*, when you paint?" inquired Marian, suddenly addressing him.

"No, but—er—Mrs. Minching does when she—when she criticises things for me," he returned, with desperate presence of mind. "She is a very good critic, is Mrs. Minching. She sits there mending, you know, and telling me what is wrong, for hours at a time."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Dexterous. "I should like to see you both at work. Won't you call her in and give us an exhibition?"

"I am afraid she is getting—er—her afternoon tea or something, now," he answered, congratulating himself on his cleverness. But the effect was unexpected.

"Tea!" cried Mrs. Cacklethorpe, settling herself in a chair and throwing back her rich silk mantle. "Why, I declare, you are entertaining us handsomely! I had meant to go down the road to the Brambles'—Mrs. Bramble is in trouble with that new housekeeper, my dear. She says she can't stay. Do you know what is the matter? They said she asked to speak to you the last time you were there; about another place, I suppose. You knew her when she was with the Donaldsons in Paris, didn't you? Well, I can go later. It will be so cozy to have tea here and a nice little gossip about our neighbors. By the way, how are our Donaldsons? And the heiress, have you seen her lately, Mr. Herbert? or is it 'on' with the 'other man'?"

"She—er—I have not been to the house for a day or two. I think she is—is confined to her room with a—oh, an attack of something or other," he returned, looking nervously at the door of the little room. "If you *will* stay to tea, Mrs. Cacklethorpe, I shall

go and hurry my housekeeper; but wouldn't you rather have it in the dining-room? You have not seen my dining-room."

"Why, I think we do very well here. Yes. What do you say, Mrs. Dexterous? I don't remember ever havin' tea in a studio before. Bohemian, you know. Have you any more pictures to show us, Mr. Herbert? What do you consider your best paintin's? People ask me, you know, and I like to be able to say."

"Oh, his best are hanging on other people's walls," said Mrs. Dexterous. "He has not anything to show us here. I think he is a tremendous sell, as a gallery. And I don't believe the tea is coming until the exact hour when Mrs. Minching has always been accustomed to serve it. Don't let us wait, Mrs. Cacklethorpe."

"Don't let me keep you, my dear, if you are in a hurry. I rather like sittin' here; it is a little different, you know, from what one does every afternoon," answered that lady, who suspected mischief of some sort and had no intention of going until she was satisfied as to its extent.

Marian gave an impatient sigh, and walking over to the corner of the room nearest the door of Julia's cupboard, she pretended to busy herself with a picture that leaned against the wall. John Herbert joined her.

"Do you want to see this," he asked, moving it out for her, "or me?"

"No," she answered, laughing, "I want to see Mrs. Cacklethorpe's back. I came here for a particular purpose this afternoon—oh, not to see you; I thought you were away, you know—and I am afraid her presence will defeat it."

"Let us hasten the feast, then," said Mr. Herbert, who did not in the least believe her, and who could hear Julia's dress rustle behind the door. "Come and try your powers on Mrs. Minching. You do what you please with everybody."

But before they had crossed the room there was a step in the hall, and

Maurice Donaldson stood in the doorway.

"Are you having a reception, Herbert?" he asked. "May I come in? Your door stood hospitably ajar. How do you, Mrs. Cacklethorpe? Mrs. Dexterous, you see your very obedient, humble servant. Tell me what I can do for you," he added, following her as she walked down the room. "I am here, as you requested. By the way, you did not expect such an audience, did you?"

"No," she said, speaking very low, with her eyes fixed on Herbert, who was laughing at some story Mrs. Cacklethorpe had begun to tell him. "I expected to see you here alone. When I asked you to meet me I thought Mr. Herbert would be away. The place was convenient, for many reasons. I am afraid, though, that I have brought you here for nothing. I can hardly tell you what I wish to tell you—I can hardly beg you—" She stopped short. "If only we were alone!" she said. "I know you would do anything I asked."

Though her words were quite inaudible to the other occupants of the room they were distinct enough to Julia, near whose place of concealment she stood. Miss Silverton felt absolutely stunned for a moment. The earth seemed cut away from beneath her feet. Could this really be Maurice—Maurice, who was her lover, her *property*? She listened intently for his next words.

"Couldn't we go somewhere else?" he said. "We must talk——"

But at that minute there was an outbreak of exclamation from Mrs. Cacklethorpe which completely overpowered the rest of the sentence.

"Look, my dear!" she cried, with the triumphant note of the trumpet in her voice. "We have caught him at last!" And she pointed to the door, where stood the perplexed Lucinda, flushed from her walk and bearing a fur boa and a magnificent opera cloak over her arm. "Now we know the meaning of the chair on the boxes. The woman 'hopes her young lady is not tired of waitin'.' He has—

shall we say a model or a sitter?—concealed about the premises."

"It would be better if you said neither, Mrs. Cacklethorpe," said Maurice, who recognized the maid. "My fiancée, Miss Silverton, was, I know, sitting for her portrait to Mr. Herbert at my particular request. There is nothing to conceal about that."

"I had no idea Mr. Herbert painted portraits," said Mrs. Dexterous, with a carefully suggested little sneer.

"He has only painted one," said Julia's voice, quietly, from behind her. "He has only painted *mine* because he loves me, as I have sat for him because I love him. Not for any other reason than that. Not at the request of anybody. I choose to be with him, I prefer him to any man in the world, and when I hold out my hand to him, as I do now, my heart is in it, for him to take or leave."

She was shaking all over with suppressed passion. Her eyes were blazing, her cheeks scarlet. She held her head up proudly, and her heavy bronze-colored dress fell about her like a royal robe. She stood all alone, with her back to the room out of which she had come, and they stood opposite in a group, looking at her.

"For him to take or leave," she repeated, holding out her hand.

And John Herbert stepped forward and kissed it.

IV

THE sudden pang with which one awakes to consciousness and a sense of loss at the same instant was felt by Julia many times during the night that followed the scene in the studio. The gradual disappearance of the other actors, the parting between herself and Herbert, the hasty explanations to Constance and subsequent departure for town, her arrival at her own house and the surprised questions of her old governess, were all like the different phases of a bad dream.

Her room seemed unfamiliar. The chairs and tables and pictures had a new expression because she looked at

them with new eyes. It seemed as if the whole world had changed in the last few hours, as if it had somehow rolled away from beneath her feet and left her floating in space, alone and stunned, but with a curious, excited discomfort about her heart that would be pain by-and-by as she began to realize what had happened.

She ordered supper and could not eat it. She went to bed and could not sleep. For hours she lay looking into the darkness and going over and over the events of the afternoon. At last she could stand it no longer, and lighting a candle, found herself some trional and took a dose that induced half a night of semi-conscious repose broken by sudden awakenings.

It is not very amusing to wrench one's heart out of the keeping of an unworthy lover and bestow it, bruised and bleeding, on another man, however ready that man is to receive it. And after all, was he so ready? Julia had not doubted that he was about to avow his love for her when the appearance of Marian Dexterous interrupted him, but she thought she had detected a certain reserve in his expressions after he and she were left alone.

Still, Maurice was punished. That was the main point. It did not matter who was pleased. Of course, he could never have loved her, but at least his pride must have been wounded, his vanity hurt, by her open repudiation of him and her acknowledged preference for John Herbert. It was well done—here her eyes flashed and sparkled as they had in the studio—and she was glad of it; and here she buried her face in the pillow and cried heartily.

It was yet quite early in the morning. The light in the room was dim, the noises in the street were distinct but intermittent. Would it never be time to get up? She was so tired of lying there, thinking and feeling. There was no rest but in action, yet what was there to do? She supposed Mr. Herbert would come to see her some time during the day. How Meadowford would ring with the

news of their engagement and its cause! She could hear Mrs. Cacklethorpe saying, "Yes, my dear, I was there. So fortunate, for otherwise I couldn't tell you about it. Well, Herbert has got the heiress—absolutely threw herself at his head, you know, and he couldn't refuse. She is just crazy about him, my dear. They say he proposed before and she would not have him. I don't believe it. She would have stuck to it fast enough if he had. Well, Maurice Donaldson is well rid of her; that's what I say."

And, indeed, this was very much what Mrs. Cacklethorpe did say when she reached the Brambles' that day, with her feathers waving in the wind and her tongue wagging at both ends. Such a piece of gossip had not been hers to disseminate for years.

Julia wondered what Gilbert would think of it all when Constance told him. She liked Gilbert. She wished she had seen him to say good-bye. She wondered what had become of Maurice when he left the studio, whether he had been relieved to find her gone when he returned to the house. He could hardly have had the audacity to spend the evening with Mrs. Dexterous, she supposed. Not that it was anything to her if he had. Only, when one has loved a man—that is, when one has been engaged to him—one does not like to believe him capable of conspicuously bad taste over and above the villainy of being in love—no, she could not yet believe he was in love—of carrying on an affair with another woman. "I always said that if I were beaten I should throw down my cards gracefully and give up the game," thought Julia, "but I never thought I should have to do it. Oh, will it never be time to get up?"

She heard the postman whistle at eight o'clock, and made up her mind that if there were a letter from Maurice she would not open it. He could make no explanation that would in the least excuse his conduct. But he might have attempted one, she thought later, when her maid brought her in

her breakfast tray and she beheld nothing more interesting in the way of letters than an elaborate advertisement of Obesity Soap.

"I don't need to be much thinner," thought Julia, pathetically, looking at her slender hand as she poured out her tea. And she pictured herself dying of rapid consumption, with John Herbert and Maurice in heart-broken attendance. It seemed a very fitting outcome of the situation.

Two cups of tea and several pieces of toast made her less pathetic and more indignant. She had worked herself up into quite a respectable rage by the time she was dressed. That she should have been in love with a man like that! That she should have been fretting—she supposed she had been fretting—all night long because she had been fortunate enough to discover in time what a contemptible person he was! It was absurd.

She wondered if he would try to see her—to argue with her. She would not see him, of course. And then she rang the bell and gave orders that she was at home to nobody but Mr. Herbert—unless someone asked for her very particularly. This being satisfactorily attended to, there was nothing to be done but get through the day as well as she could. She would not go out because—because she might meet Maurice in the street (which, being interpreted, meant missing him at the house), so she sat down to read, and got up to wander restlessly about the room, went up stairs to talk to her bewildered governess, and down stairs to give orders to the cook, who was an old family servant and had known her since her babyhood. At last she went into the drawing-room and tried, with the perfectly impossible set of writing materials she kept there, to write a letter to Constance.

At twelve o'clock a hansom drove up to the door and the bell rang. Julia's heart flew to her throat and then fell to her feet. She sprang up, but an attentive servant had already opened the door, and she could not

make her escape through the hall. She retreated to the curtains which divided the front from the middle room.

"Is Miss Silverton at home?" Maurice's voice inquired. "I wish particularly to see her."

"I am not sure, sir. I will see. What name shall I say?" returned the discreet parlor-maid, who did not know Mr. Donaldson. She pushed open the door for him as she spoke and ran up stairs with the card he had given her.

Maurice walked toward the window and stood looking out.

Julia, who might easily have slipped through the curtains if she had desired to do so, took a step forward instead, her flounced skirt rustling on the parquet floor. She told herself that it would be cowardly to avoid the interview.

"I am here," she said, "but I don't know what you can possibly have to say to me."

Maurice turned at the sound of her voice and approached her.

"I have a great deal to say to you," he answered, gravely, "but not yet. First, I should like to hear some explanation of your extraordinary conduct."

"Of my extraor—of *my* conduct?" stammered Julia. "What do you mean?"

"Well, it is not usual for a lady who is engaged to one man to retract her word as publicly and insultingly as possible and give it to another under circumstances that are at least questionable."

"And it is not fitting that a man, if he is engaged to a woman whom he pretends to love, should make clandestine appointments with another woman, whose affection for him is as evident as his for her."

"There you speak no more than the truth," said Maurice. "My affection for her is just as evident as hers for me."

"And for me, I suppose, it never existed?" cried Julia, tauntingly.

"That I do not admit for a moment. I have loved you almost from

the first time I saw you, and in the bottom of your heart you know it, whatever you choose to think."

"You took a curious way of showing it. You must remember that I *heard* what Mrs. Dexterous and you were saying, and you cannot explain it away. Oh, when I think how I trusted you! how fond I was of you——!"

"*You* took rather a curious way of showing *that*. You find me in a somewhat equivocal position, and judge me without a moment's hesitation, asking for no explanation, willing to throw over the whole future happiness of our lives for one moment of revenge. I could not have treated you so."

"If you have any excuse to offer I will listen," said Julia, tentatively.

He laughed. "You are inimitable!" he exclaimed. "You overhear a few words you cannot understand, you renounce me with a flourish of trumpets, and now you say you will listen to my excuses. It is a little late, Julia."

"A little late to offer them—I quite agree with you," she answered.

"To a lady who has given me no earlier opportunity?" He stood looking down at her half-humorously and half-sadly. "But, as a matter of fact, I have no excuses to make," he added.

"So I imagined. The indefensible position you were in——"

"And what were you in?" he asked, suppressing a smile.

The obviously truthful answer was, "In the cupboard," but this did not suggest itself to Julia.

"As you yourself testified, I had been sitting for my portrait," she said, coldly.

"With my knowledge and approval—indeed, at my particular request, as I also testified."

"You were so kind as to say so, but it was not necessary for you to defend me."

"I am afraid you are not the best judge of that."

"Suppose we do not discuss it any more," said Julia. "We will say that I chose, for my own reasons, to break

my engagement with you and to marry Mr. Herbert. I am accountable to nobody but myself for my conduct."

Maurice laughed again. "Then I will appeal to you against yourself. From Philip dr—I mean from Julia's pride to Julia's sense of justice. Remarking, by the way, that our engagement is not broken, and that you will never marry Herbert if you live a thousand years."

"Shall I not?" cried Julia, greatly incensed. "We shall see!"

"If we live long enough," agreed Maurice. "Suppose we sit down. I have a great deal to say to you, and I don't want to tire you more than I can help."

Julia subsided into a corner of the sofa, looking very mutinous, and he drew up a chair opposite.

"I suppose it sounds absurd to say that my poor old father is really the cause of all this trouble, but it is true. You remember, perhaps, coming into the room one day when Gilbert was reading a letter from him, announcing his sudden arrival 'on private and particular business?'"

Julia nodded, and Maurice moved a little nearer.

"Later we had a letter from my sister, telling us that she had reason to believe he was infatuated with Marian Dexterous, whom he had seen in Paris last Spring, and that he was coming over with the intention of marrying her if she would have him. While the thing was perfectly preposterous and unsuitable, it was by no means impossible. We were quite powerless to stop it if he chose to persist, but we wished to keep it quiet until the matter was settled beyond a doubt. You can see that Mrs. Dexterous and her proceedings became of more and more interest to us."

"So much so, that you began to make love to her on your own account."

"No," said Maurice, smiling, "I should hardly say I made love to her, and I do not think she is under any such impression."

"Yet you have secret meetings with her at Mr. Herbert's studio."

"There was not much secrecy about that meeting, as it turned out, and I am hanged if I know yet what she would have said to me if we had been alone. As far as Gilbert and I could tell from her note, she wanted to consult me about something connected with my father's arrival and a 'most unhappy and penitent woman,' whom we took to be herself. But why she selected Herbert's studio for the confession, and for what reason she is a most unhappy and penitent woman—unless she has brought my respected father over here on false pretences, and is ashamed of herself, which I more than suspect is the case—I know no more than you do. I left the house directly after you made your announcement, and I have not seen or heard from her since."

Julia covered her perplexed eyes with her hand and sat perfectly still.

"You see," continued Maurice, "I offer no excuses. I make a simple explanation of the facts. But I appeal to my Julia, against the imperious lady who renounced me yesterday, to tell me whether she does not think some excuses are due me. No answer? Is our engagement broken, Julia?"

He pushed away the chair and took his place beside her on the sofa.

"Don't you think you might have trusted me, my sweetheart? After all, you know I am at least a——"

"Oh, never mind what you are!" cried Miss Silverton, throwing herself into his arms. "I am the most graceless baggage in the world, and deserve to be beaten. Only—only—I——"

"You hope I won't beat you. Your confidence is not misplaced," said Maurice, kissing her hair, as her face was hidden against his shoulder.

"That was not at all what I meant," she declared, sitting up indignantly. "I was going to say that you must admit I had some reason for thinking as I did."

"And for behaving as you did, also."

"No, no," murmured Miss Silverton, returning hastily to her former position. "I am afraid that was—"

was ill-judged. I was so angry, you see. I am so unaccustomed to lose control of myself, I hardly knew what I was going to do till I had done it."

"You did it with a vengeance," said Maurice, laughing. "Mrs. Cacklethorpe will never forget it to her dying day. And I think Mrs. Dexterous was rather taken aback. It hit her pretty hard, you see."

"Mrs. Dexterous! Why?" cried Julia, sitting upright again.

"Well, I fancy she is rather in love with Herbert, herself," returned Mr. Donaldson, carelessly, but watching the effect of his words.

"In love with Mr. Herbert! Good heavens! Why, I am engaged to Mr. Herbert at the present minute! I forgot all about it! What am I to do, Maurice? Oh, what an awful tangle everything is in! And there seems to be no decent way out of it but for me to marry him."

"Oh, I wouldn't go quite so far as that. Suppose you see him and explain to him——"

"That I was just using him as a means of punishing you, because I was—was jealous of you," said Julia, ruefully, "while all the time I really loved you dearly. It does not seem easy to say, does it?"

"Not very," admitted Maurice, keeping back a smile.

"Because he really is very fond of me, and it was not his fault, at all."

"That is true also, and nobody could possibly deny his fondness or his lack of fault. But I find that just lately he also has yielded to the fascinations of our wonderful widow, and is, somewhat to his own surprise, head over ears in love with her. Quite mad about her."

"He is? Are you sure? Then that must have been what he was going to tell me about when he spoke of his 'heart secrets,' and I imagined—But how did you find it out?"

"He told me himself."

"He did?" cried Julia. "How mortifying! And what a relief! What a sensible man he is not to like me!"

"He would have been very far

from a sensible man if he had avowed any great preference for you after I began to talk to him."

"When did you see him?"

"I waited until he was alone in the studio and went back there directly. I told him that, under some misapprehension, you had been transferring property that did not belong to you, and anybody attempting to accept the same would be held responsible for a misdemeanor. In fact, I rather threatened to have his life-blood if he thought of holding you to anything you had said, even after giving you due time for reflection. And he, like the man of the world he is, instead of quarreling with me, showed me at once that he understood what had happened and why it had happened. He told me of his extreme admiration and affection for you, disclaimed any idea of holding you to your word—it was here that I surprised his confidence about Mrs. Dexterous—but added that he should consider himself at your disposition until he heard from you that your engagement to me was still agreeable to you."

"Isn't he a dear!" said Julia. "So sensible! You can tell at once he has been a great deal with women all his life. And do you wonder that, next to you——"

"No, indeed, I only wonder you did not take him long ago; but he can't have another chance. It is too late now. As I said a short time ago, you shall never marry him if you live a thousand years."

"You said 'will' before, you know."

"Is our engagement broken, Julia? No? Then I shall say what I please, and dictate to you as much as I like. You promised to let me manage you, and then you publicly defied me! Now, I am going to be despotic in private life, I warn you, and intimidate you with threats if you don't do what I say."

"While the fit is on you, would you mind dictating what I shall say to Mr. Herbert?" said Julia, rising and going to the writing table.

"Far be it from me to interfere in a private correspondence of that na-

ture," returned Maurice, collapsing at once.

Julia laughed. "I shall just say that he is the very nicest man in the world, but, on the whole, I find my engagement to you less disagreeable than I expected."

"That will do perfectly," said Maurice. "Though your reference to me is perhaps unduly flattering."

Julia wrote quickly, and in a few minutes the letter was signed and addressed.

"Is he at Meadowford?" she asked, looking up.

"No," said Maurice, "he is at the Knickerbocker Club. We came up together this morning. You might send the letter there. He is waiting for it."

"Upon my word, you seem to have taken things very much for granted."

"My dear little girl," he answered, "there was only one way out of this particular difficulty, but if there had been a hundred, you would have taken my way, because you *know* I love you and understand you, and because you are beginning to find out that you like me—even a little more than you thought. Aren't you?"

"And suppose I had found out that I did not like you?"

"Why, then you should have married me just the same, as a fitting punishment for all the trouble you have given me."

"Maurice," said Miss Silverton, solemnly, "did you sleep at all last night?"

"Not unless I slept standing," he returned, with a short laugh.

"Well, no more did I, worth mentioning, and I came to the conclusion—sub-consciously, you know—that, justly angry as I was with you, in some way you *must* prove yourself right, because I loved you. And I think that is the difference between men and women; men use their reason to prove their hearts, and women use their hearts to disprove their reason."

"Luncheon is served," said the voice of the servant at the door.

"You will stay?" said Julia.

"I hoped you might ask me," answered Maurice, modestly.

"You might send away your hansom."

"But I must go down to meet the *Gascogne* directly after luncheon. I thought perhaps you would come with me. We shall find Constance and Gilbert at the dock. It will be the least formal way of— Oh, good-morning, Miss Boyd. I have been instructing your pupil in psychomachy this morning, and it is a fatiguing process, as perhaps you have found. May I come and refresh exhausted nature in your society?"

"What is psychomachy?" whispered Julia, as they went into the dining-room.

"A conflict of the soul with the body," he returned, pulling out her chair for her.

They had a very merry meal together, indulging in small jokes and allusions that so completely puzzled and confused Miss Boyd that she watched them later drive away from the door with the same sense of relief as that experienced by a nervous pussy-cat when the youth of the neighborhood return to school.

It was a beautiful Autumn day, with a deep blue sky, great rolling white clouds and a fresh salt breeze. The streets were filled with carriages, and Julia and Maurice recognized several nodding and smiling acquaintances as their hansom threaded its way down Fifth Avenue. There was the usual confusion about the Waldorf-Astoria: omnibuses crawling up-hill, with weary horses straining and struggling; omnibuses sliding down-hill, pushing their horses ahead of them till the harness threatened a disastrous leave-taking; red cable cars clanging their way across town, clumsy automobiles backing and filling, hansoms dashing out of Thirty-third Street and losing themselves in the general mass of vehicles going north or vehicles going south; hawkers of over-blown violets and chrysanthemums moving to and fro on the sidewalk among the people.

"What a caravansary it is!" said

Julia, looking at the huge red pile. "Who but an American would willingly stay in a great, noisy, crowded place like that? There is a woman who looks exactly like Mrs. Dexterous just getting into a hansom! I don't think I shall ever care to be thrown much with Mrs. Dexterous after this, Maurice, so I hope she won't marry your father."

"I don't see why she should," he answered, "for I am sure she is in love with Herbert and he with her. However, there is no accounting for women, and I shall not be easy until the dear old gentleman is safely out of the country."

"You will just let him wait till *we* are married, won't you?" asked Julia, after a pause. "You suggested it first, you know."

"Darling," cried Maurice, "that is the best thing you have said yet. If only we were not in this confounded——!"

But at this instant the horse was pulled up with such a jerk that they nearly found themselves deposited on the pavement, and a towering policeman, with black hair and red mustaches, warned them back with one uplifted hand while he escorted five female shoppers, two errand girls, an old woman with a pug (who, not satisfied of her safety, even under his protection, ran splay-footed ahead of him all the way), and a cautious-minded elderly clergyman with an umbrella, across Twenty-third Street.

As they began to move forward again another hansom overtook and passed them, and in it were seated Mrs. Dexterous and John Herbert.

"He did not lose much time," said Julia, laughing.

"Or she did not," suggested Maurice. "I wonder where the deuce they are going."

But it very soon became apparent that the destination of the two cabs was the same. Sometimes they followed each other; sometimes, in friendly rivalry, made a dash for the same opening at the same minute, and drove along side by side; sometimes the stream of travel divided

them, but they never quite lost sight of each other through all the turns and twistings of the lower Westside streets, and they both drew up in triumph at the entrance to the pier of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, with Maurice's man a trifle in the lead.

Julia hastily descended and hurried into the big building.

"It really is embarrassing, you know," she said, over her shoulder; "though it is awfully funny. I suppose she has come to meet your father. But why bring Mr. Herbert? Are they going to ask his blessing here, on the dock?"

"Heaven knows! It is beyond me. By Jove, the vessel is in; we must be late! There go the gangplanks; she will be landing her passengers directly. I wonder where Gilbert and Constance have hidden themselves."

But at that instant Gilbert pushed his way through the crowd that was gathering at the foot of the gangplank, and joined them.

"Constance is over there," he said.

"Come along. Thought you might not get here. I pictured you, with a shotgun, sitting outside the door of Julia's house, to keep her in and Herbert out. Why, here she is! This is famous! Then it is all right. I am awfully glad, and Constance will be delighted."

All the time he was making his way, with some difficulty, back to the place where he had left his wife, Julia and Maurice following him.

Constance was dressed in the most perfect of traveling gowns, crowned with a flat hat of burnished bird breasts, and stood as calmly aloof from the confusion about her as if she were a statue of the latest mode left there for transportation. She presented a beautiful, soft, pink cheek to Julia.

"Well, my dear," she said, "it is to be Maurice, after all, is it? I don't think much of your way of ignoring things," and she laughed a little; "but never mind, it has all turned out for the best. You know I told

you that you did not really want your own way."

"I am just as well satisfied with the way I am going now," said Julia, with a glance of amusement at Maurice, "as if I had chosen it myself."

"And how does Mr. Herbert feel?" inquired Constance.

"He seems to be contented with his lot," returned Miss Silverton. "But you might ask him yourself. He is here, somewhere, with Marian Dexterous."

"Marian here!" cried Mrs. Donaldson. "No! Really, she is impossible. Gilbert has some cock-and-bull story about his father's wishing to marry her. I should soon put a stop to that."

"She is going on board this minute!" observed Julia. And indeed, waved onward by gold-braided officials, and stemming with difficulty the first downpouring of released passengers, the fine figure of Mrs. Dexterous could be seen making its way up the inclined pathway. Gilbert and Maurice, who had pressed forward for the same purpose, were completely distanced.

"Do you suppose she will have the nerve to go to his cabin?" asked the former of his brother, as they finally succeeded in reaching the deck of the steamer.

"I really could not say what she would not have the nerve to do, but I think we had better hasten to the rescue."

This was, however, more easily said than done, and it was several minutes before the cabin of "Monsieur Donaldson" could be discovered. Moreover, when found it proved to be empty; but on their way back they came upon the two people for whom they were in search, sitting side by side in earnest conversation in a corner of the saloon. Mr. Donaldson was just receiving a packet from the hands of the widow.

"Do you suppose it is a gift of welcome, or his love letters returned?" said Gilbert, irreverently. "Poor old governor! Doesn't he look surprised!"

And truly the expression on Mr. Donaldson's handsome countenance was one of astonishment, which was rapidly succeeded by relief.

"You don't tell me so!" he was saying as his sons approached. "You don't tell me so! I am infinitely relieved. I feel as if a weight had been taken off my mind. It has turned out most fortunately for all parties, and I shall be very glad to proceed no farther. I feel no desire to be severe, you understand. The temptation was doubtless very great."

"He takes it like a man, doesn't he?" whispered Gilbert.

"I cannot thank you enough, dear Mr. Donaldson," Mrs. Dexterous answered, "both on my own behalf and—I might say, my client's. But it is just what I expected of you. You are the most high-minded, generous, chivalrous man in the world, and I feel it is a privilege to have known you."

"I say," said Gilbert, "it is time to interfere. She will have him back again."

He coughed loudly as he spoke, and Mrs. Dexterous, turning and seeing him, sprang up in some confusion.

"I am keeping your father from you in the most shocking way," she said. "Forgive me, Mr. Maurice—you look the sterner of the two—and I will atone for it by taking myself off at once. But you will come to see me, please, Mr. Donaldson, won't you? I shall be in town for a few days at the Waldorf. Thank you so much. I know you will never regret what you have done to-day."

She looked up, hesitated for an instant, then, murmuring that he was an old dear, she threw her arms round his neck, gave him a hearty kiss, and fled from the saloon before any of the three could collect their wits.

"That is a very extraordinarily fine young woman," said Mr. Donaldson, looking after her. He stood with his right hand in Gilbert's and his left on Maurice's shoulder, a tall, soldierly, upright old gentleman, with faded blue eyes and curly white hair. "Owing to her tact and kindness I have

been saved from a very disagreeable duty."

He moved away from them and began to pace slowly to and fro in a manner habitual to him.

"You—you regarded it in the light of a *duty*, then?" said Gilbert.

"Certainly I did. Such things are never pleasant," returned his father.

"The discrepancy of age, perhaps—" began Maurice, in some surprise.

"What on earth has that got to do with it?" cried Mr. Donaldson, sharply.

"Alice has an idea——"

"Oh, then, Alice suspected? I suppose that is how the thing happened to get out among you. You discussed it at some time when you were overheard by the servants. Well, all's well that ends well. I am relieved that I do not have to prosecute."

"Prosecute!" exclaimed Gilbert.

"What other course was open to me if I wanted to recover what had been stolen?"

"Stolen!" echoed Gilbert.

"What is the matter with you, Gilbert?" said his father, impatiently. "I suppose if somebody had managed to abstract ten thousand dollars' worth of United States coupon bonds from your strong-box you would call it stealing, wouldn't you?"

"And Mrs. Dexterous——"

"Mrs. Dexterous brought them back to me to-day, with assurances of sincere repentance. I trust the difficulty of disposing of them had nothing to do with it."

"Good God!" said Maurice, "there must be some mistake."

"It would have been difficult to prove, perhaps," conceded Mr. Donaldson, "and I was most loath to brand any woman as a criminal. This confession and the restoration of the bonds simplify everything. Of course, she must never take another place."

"I—I am afraid she has taken one already—" stammered Gilbert.

"Impossible! Mrs. Dexterous tells me that in the interview she had with her, at Mrs. Bramble's, the woman declared her intention of leaving the country at once. We must see that this

is accomplished quietly. I do not wish to trouble that charming lady further. This has been a most disagreeable business for her. She tells me that, but for an unfortunate misunderstanding, she would have placed the matter in your hands, Maurice, and got you to see the woman and receive the papers. She has felt the responsibility greatly. She says she did not dare come down here alone, lest some accident should happen to her while she was in the possession of such a trust. She brought a friend with her, a Mr. Herbert. I must tender my thanks to this gentleman. Can it be John Herbert, the artist? You don't tell me so! I thought I noticed in Paris— Yes. Well, she is one in a thousand. He is a lucky man! I am greatly grieved and disappointed in Mrs. Sykes," concluded Mr. Donaldson, shaking his head sadly. "She received many kindnesses from my daughter and me while she was in our service. I thought her an admirable housekeeper and a most excellent woman."

Maurice's hand had actually to force back the words upon his brother's lips.

"It has been a very distressing thing to you, I can see, sir," he said. "We sympathize entirely with your feelings in the matter, and I suppose the less said about it the better, as it has ended so quietly. Now, let us get you off this vessel. Constance and Julia will think you are lost."

"Bless my soul!" cried his father, "are *they* here? Let us go at once. Why didn't you tell me? My man is looking after the baggage, so we may leave without delay. I would not have had those delicate young women standing about this draughty dock on my account for the world. And my new daughter-in-law, too! Maurice, I feel this as a very pretty compliment. Take me to them at once. Dear, dear!" said the kindly old gentleman, hurrying his sons along, "I have unwittingly been guilty of conduct most abhorrent to my sense of courtesy," and in a perfect tumult of outraged politeness he swept them off the ship.

"Your father is an old dear," said

Julia to Maurice, as they drove home together. "He treats me as if I were a sort of a goddess who had condescended to marry the son of a mortal."

"A very proper way to treat you. Mrs. Dexterous also says he is an 'old dear,' and *she* kissed him, which you did not."

"She is a brazen minx, which I am not."

"She is not so brazen as your majesty thinks. She is an extraordinarily fine young woman, as my father called her. If it had not been for you and your dear little face and your tormenting ways I think I could have—Julia! Do you know that hurt?"

"Never mind," said Julia, petulantly, and quoted from "Undine:" "'If I had not bitten your finger, who knows what fine things you would have put into your story about *Bertalda*!'"

Maurice laughed. "There is nobody like you, after all, my sweet," he said, "nobody in all the world; but we really have mistaken Mrs. Dexterous among us." And he told her what had taken place that afternoon. "So you see," he concluded, "if Fate had permitted me to keep that appointment in secret, I should have known all about this business yesterday——"

"Yes, but there are some things I should not have known. For instance, that one's love for a person is proved, first, by what one is willing to forgive, and then, by what one is willing to be forgiven. Maurice, dear——"

"If you say another word of that sort to me in this cab, Julia, I will not answer for the consequences!"

"I will wait until we get home, then," she said. "Home! That is a poor name to give to a place where you do not live! Don't you wish we were going back to our own house?"

"William," said Mr. Puffles, entering the pantry, where that worthy young man was engaged in cleaning silver, "the family is coming down to-morrow in time for lunch. Mr. Maurice's man has just arrived, and

he says, 'Put places for seven,' he says, 'for that's the number you'll have. There is old Mr. Donaldson coming to stop,' he says, 'and Miss Silverton for over Sunday, and Mrs. Dexterous and Mr. Herbert, that is invited just for the meal, and there's three in the family,' he says, 'and that makes seven.' Which it do, William, as nobody can deny. But what I say is, what did you mean when you told me only this very morning—told me with your identical mouth, William—that it were all over between her and Mr. Maurice?"

"I told you what was told to me, Mr. Puffles," replied William, with dignity. "A man can do no more. One of the grooms had it from Mrs. Cacklethorpe's own coachman, which I ask no better authority. He heard as how there'd been a big flare-up. 'Everything kicked to pieces,' he says, 'and the young lady bolted to town without a bridle. And his old woman,' he says, meaning Mrs. C.—which I don't approve his language, him not being long in the place—'telling the thing high and low, till not a gentleman among them,' he says, 'but would be afraid to drive her.' What's the matter?" he added, seeing the respected countenance of his chief purple with laughter.

"Why, it is a bit of a joke, William," said Mr. Puffles, wiping his eyes; "a very humorous saying you have just made. 'She bolted to town without a bridle,' says you, and so Miss Silverton did go off to town without marrying Mr. Maurice. You did not see it, my lad, but I have waited on table for so many years that maybe I am quicker than some to see a thing like that, quicker than some. For it trains a man's mind as well as his legs to wait on the quality, William. They have no patience. What they wants they wants quick, and what they says they says quick, and they don't mind what they says about each other, neither. The trouble with the quality, in most places, is—" and here Mr. Puffles looked owlsh with wisdom—"that they've got no regular work to do, and so they have

time to gossip. That's the mischief of it!"

"But if they did the work," observed the footman, with the air of one making a point, "what the mischief would we do?"

"You are a well-meaning lad, William," said the butler, "though ignorant in ways I will not weary you by repeating, so that you don't always understand the turn of my thoughts. But this I'll say to you, that the less you talk and the more you listen and work the better it will be for you. It's my belief, William, that there is far less harm done in the world by what people do than by what they say they do, or other people say they've done. You mark my words.

Gossip is a bad thing; and that reminds me that Mr. Maurice's man says that Mr. Maurice is going to marry Miss Silvertown next month; he had it direct from her maid. And he do say that a happier couple you never laid your eyes on. Now it seems but right to me that we should drink their healths at supper to-night, and I'll stand treat, William," said Puffles, swelling with pride, "in a choice bottle I had put by for myself. There is a rumor," he continued, looking abnormally sly, "that Mr. Herbert and Mrs. Dexterous is going to do likewise, and that being the case, young man, I think I'll stand two bottles. It's none too much, William, it's none too much."



"OUR SET"

NO, he and she have never met—
You see, he's not "in our set."
But sometimes, at a seaside hop,
Or on the crowded city street,
He sees two pleading eyes and sweet,
That seem to say, "Why can't you get
Admission into our set?"

And he, who thought it vain before,
And scorned the foolish, gilded youth,
Begins to think the dross is ore.
It may be worth—but no! the truth
Is that a pair of woman's eyes—
What nonsense! She's a flaunting belle,
And he a toiling, humble youth.
"A man's a man," she thinks, "and yet,
I wish he were in our set!"

"I saw him dance with Molly Jones,
That horrid, vulgar, fast coquette;
Pshaw! what degrading things I think!
He'll never be in our set!"

And still they meet, but still they pass.
Alas! the eyes no longer plead!
She's learned to school her glances now,
So he may there no longings read.
Her heart may break; she'll not forget
That he is not "in our set."

MAY A. WARING.

THE KING'S CHAMBER

By Theodosia Garrison

IN the King's chamber are strange things
Wrought of fine gold and ivories,
And carven chests from over seas,
And cabinets of gauds and rings;
And the great bed that is the King's
Is hung with purple, gold entraced,
And a deep mirror, many-faced,
From silver chains reflects and swings.

Two windows open to the west;
Between them, on its braconette,
Sits a strange bird with eyes of jet
And blurs of color on its breast;
And on the wall, an honored guest,
A portrait hangs—of one whose eyes
Grow into mine with proud surprise
That fain would fright me from my quest.

And in the niche a dim light glows
Like that white flame that guards the pyx,
And paints the ebon crucifix
And Christ's contorted form, and throws
A shade as black as human woes
That, cross-formed, wavers on the wall,
As if His image still let fall
Shadow of warning on His foes.

Down stairs the feast goes on; the floors
Echo the clang of oath and song.
Methinks it taketh over-long
For men to prate of love and wars.
In the King's chamber are closed doors,
And in the gloom I stand apart
Until that step which treads my heart
Sounds through the winding corridors.

Love, who hath cast out fear, behold
Thy handiwork, how good it is!
This mouth that hath not known a kiss,
This hair that wraps me fold on fold!
But yestermouth, if one had told
Their beauty, I had mocked; to-night
They are my coin to buy delight—
My mouth, my eyes, my arms are gold!

THE SMART SET

But yestermouth I came—a child
New to court jests and flatteries,
With shame-dyed blushes for men's lies,
And proud, bright eyes that seldom smiled;
And when one laughed, "The King, beguiled,
Stays long in France—a wanton's eye
Seems thong to hold a monarch by,"
I frowned and thought my ears defiled.

Then came a certain day—we played
At cards; within the sun's red ring
Earth, as a fruit, lay ripening,
And in our arbor was small shade.
Then laughter, at a word, was stayed:
"Sweethearts, will give no welcoming?"
And one 'mazed girl's voice shrilled, "The King!"
And I stood trembling and afraid.

Then someone spake my name; in one
Swift moment's space I raised mine eyes
To meet his smile's soft mockeries,
And in that glance was life begun.
Meseemed the earth reeled, and the sun
Leaped at my heart as some great flame,
Or yet his mouth had formed my name,
Or touch of lips on hand was done.

Oh, but the King is kingliest
Of all live men, strong-armed and fair
And beautiful as Lucifer
When God had claimed him as his best;
But the King's eyes, when his lips jest,
Are weariest of all sad things,
And ever in his laugh there rings
The broken accents of unrest.

I, who am noblest born of all
The damosels who grace his court,
And lend gay presence to his sport
At tourney and at festival;
I, who move proudly in his hall,
With high, proud eyes, feel at my heart
The mighty passion throb and smart
That holds my very life in thrall.

Yet pride and shame had kept my blood
From turning fire, to make the gay
Sport of the gossip's holiday,
And I had held to what I would;
But at the mass to-day he stood
Full-eyed upon no other than
That exquisite white courtesan
Whose slow smile sneers at maidenhood.

She whom Gramont hath brought from France,
To win him favors from the King
(So runs the tale)—I saw her fling
A look like some flame-pointed lance
Swift in his eyes, and, as by chance,
He leaned, pressed closer, smiled; and then
My throat choked on the priest's "Amen"
And my eyes dizzied in their glance.

Could I have given fangs to hate
She would have fallen in her place,
Prone on her fair, accursed face,
That wears too many smiles of late;
Yea, could I blast her with some great,
Torturing death, too terrible
For any man to guess or tell,
That death this morn had been her fate.

But when the mass was done I fled
Fast to my chamber's solace where
I beat my breast and plucked my hair,
And called on God to smite me dead.
Then scorned myself—then mocked, and said:
"I strive no more—my tears are done.
Between the midnight and the sun
Shall Love command me in God's stead."

Then straight I rose, and saw that day
Died like a dim cloud in the waste
Of empty sky, and called in haste
My tiring-maids with rich array
Of silken robes, and bade them lay
Jewels on breast and arms, and touch
My face, that whitened over-much,
With red—in that French wanton's way.

And I laughed, "Make me like a rose—
Perfumed and soft. Perchance to-night
One plucks a rose for his delight.
Make me the fairest one that blows!"
And one, "Nay, damosel, like those
Strange blooms the witches give, that make
Men mad with love if they but take
One look before their mad eyes close."

And when the jades had gone I tied
My mask about my face, and made
My cloak enwrap me like a shade;
Then, noiseless as a shade, I hied
To the King's door. A soldier cried
An oath and stayed me; when I dropped
My necklace in his hand, he stopped,
Stared, nodded, grinned—and stood aside.

THE SMART SET

In the King's chamber can I pray
 Those useless, empty prayers that slip
 So easily from lip to lip,
 And that pleased God but yesterday?
 What word is left for me to say,
 Who of God's anger have no dread,
 But dare the living and the dead
 This night to win me from my way?

Yea, Love hath bound me like a spell.
 I have no will to hide or fear;
 To whisper, lest men's ears should hear,
 Or shrink from tales their tongues may tell.
 Oh, my beloved, loved over-well,
 Meseems that if your kiss were laid
 Close on my lips, that, unafraid,
 They still would smile through Death and Hell.

Love, crown me with thy wit, thy grace,
 That when the King is come, and when
 He hath dismissed his gentlemen,
 I may come proudly from my place
 And lift my mask and show my face,
 And tempt his quickening caress,
 Till all my love and tenderness
 Lie folded in his close embrace.

This is my soul's last hour—I fling
 All Heaven away, as some spoiled glove,
 For this one golden dream of love.
 Not the calm Christ nor saints that wing
 Their way through Paradise may bring
 The power to stay me. Hark! I hear
 Laughter and steps draw near, more near—
 He comes! he comes! The King! the King!



CERTAINLY A STRAIN

“WHAT is this strenuous life they are talking about so much these days?”
 inquired the man who lives close to his office.
 “It's living in the suburbs,” responded the train-chaser.



LOOKING BACKWARD

CORA—I don't see how you could begin that book and not finish it!
 MERRITT—Pshaw! Don't you girls often finish a book and not begin it?

THE ENGLISH VIEW OF OUR SOCIETY

By Mrs. Sherwood

I HAVE so many very dear friends in England, and have been so kindly treated there, that I always feel ashamed to speak of those little mistakes which even clever people and good friends make in the best society of England in regard to us and our society. Their view is a peculiarity; it is not a "hatefulness"—it is inevitable; they *cannot* understand us. Perhaps Lord Houghton, a very amiable-tempered man, described it better than anyone else when he said: "You see, we live on an island, and we cannot see far beyond the edges. The absence of boundary is our limitation. You could be, perhaps, a more reasonable people if you were not so remotely bounded by the setting sun."

Their lack of knowledge of our geography always amazed me. Once I was dining at the house of Andrew Lang, the distinguished scholar; and Walter Herries Pollock, then the editor of the *Saturday Review*, was present. We began to talk of Edwin Booth, greatly admired in England. "Oh," said he, "where could I find him? I want to write to him." I said, "At Newport, Rhode Island." "Ah, yes; Newport, Rhode Island, New York." "No," said a Newport gentleman at the table; "we have a sovereign State of our own—Rhode Island, the smallest State but the cockiest in the great Union of States, and we should be very angry if you added on another State to help the postmaster find Edwin Booth!" "But sometimes I have addressed him at *New York*." "Yes," said his informant, "direct Edwin Booth,

New York, and it will find him." "Direct Edwin Booth, *Universe*," said another. Now this last mentioned American was *too too*—he had not a sufficient *boundary*. They expect us to know all about their countries, and to have a realizing sense of the greatness of England; but they do not, especially the old ladies who stay at home, understand our immense distances, the thirty hours to St. Louis, the five days to San Francisco, the forty hours to New Orleans, the twenty-four to Palm Beach, which for an American lady have no terrors; yet European women are willing to take sixty hours from Paris to Vienna, and the poor murdered Empress of Austria traveled incessantly. I used to ask them why they did not quote her as having quicksilver in her heels, as they did us.

It was a beautiful day in late July when Dr. Brachet took me on his arm and walked with me the short distance from the Grand Hôtel d'Aix, the best hotel in Europe, to the next best, the Grand Hôtel de l'Europe, at Aix-les-Bains, to introduce me to my afterward very dear friends, the Hon. Mrs. Wellesley and Miss Ricardo, two English ladies whom he held in great esteem. "Now," said he, "you need not be lonely any more, and I wish you to come over and sit under these trees with the English ladies. They hate all Americans. They think you are very rich, very extravagant, very exaggerated; but I tell them you are not so stingy as they are, nor so narrow. Why, Ricardo makes everybody *pay for her*!" I saw he was going to make a joke of it all, so I did not fear much,

particularly as I observed a beautiful woman, with fine manners, rise to come toward me, dressed in deepest mourning, who he told me was the Hon. Mrs. Wellesley, a great friend of the Queen and a daughter of Lord Rokeby. The blood I knew well, and following her was a little old lady, with a shawl of gray, with hair in white puffs and a very dressy hat and a brilliant gown, whose irresistible charm of manner made one say "Fairy godmother" at once. "Miss Ricardo," whispered the Doctor, "very rich, very fashionable; knows everyone in London, and is *very distingue*." We were shaking hands, and Miss Ricardo was laughing as he finished.

Never was there a more auspicious place for a meeting. The whispering elms met over our heads; the birds were flitting about; the handsome portico of the Europe formed a background to the trees. The hotel was surrounded by carefully prepared flower beds, and the beautiful grounds recalled the turf of England. The distant Jura sent its sunny lights down through the landscape, and the Dauphinoise Alps were shining, snowy white, at the other end of the valley. We were all lame, and walked with our canes, hence were all glad to sit. Of course there is no such introduction as a common complaint. The Doctor having said, "This is an American; I am so sorry that Columbus discovered America!" bounded away; for he was a Mercury, indeed, and bore the caduceus, the twining serpents of Mercury, on his seal. He always pretended to hate the Americans.

"I cannot rescind that operation of Columbus," I said. There was never a moment's coolness in our friendly intercourse, but instead there was an intimate friendship, much laughter, and our serious and sincere love for one other has borne a thousand tests. Miss Ricardo, who was older than either of us, died several years ago. She was the first to go, and I mourned her sincerely, but she never comprehended America or

the American people at all. If she met a very great crank—and of course, we do have cranks—she would say, "So American!" I once met "Bull Run" Russell at her dinner table in London, and he gave us an account of his escape from our American Flodden Field, to me very interesting, to her wholly unimportant. "Why didn't they eat each other up, like the Kilkenny cats?" said Miss Ricardo. The idea that we had a principle for which we were fighting—a principle dearer than life—had never occurred to her; and the home quarrel of the Americans was beneath her contempt. So one had to take this otherwise very kind and most agreeable and interesting woman with a grain of salt. Mrs. Wellesley was a far more lenient critic, and being so much at Windsor Castle, had met the best of our ministers and of American women visiting England. Still, she had seen some very queer specimens, and could never get over Jesse Grant's insisting on dining with the "Queen herself, instead of her servants," Mrs. Wellesley being one of the so-called servants. Indeed, we started from such different premises, and were so unlike in all our experiences of life, that I, finding that we might differ painfully on these themes, dropped them, as there was a sympathy, a compassion, a love of humor and a world-wide culture in all these ladies. With Miss Ricardo I drove much about lovely Savoy, going to see the house of Jean Jacques Rousseau, where he lived with Madame de Warens, and I heard from her some of the best modern stories of the Italians, particularly of Victor Emmanuel. She told me that the Queen asked him whom he dined with when at home alone. "Ah! madame," said he, "I dine alone with my sad recollections." The Queen was very full of compassion, until Prince Albert told her of the buxom Rosina and the morganatic, very handsome family.

But Miss Ricardo had read Bret Harte as history, and she believed that we had very little refinement or culture in our daily life; in fact, she

thought "The Luck of Roaring Camp" indicated our everyday New York existence, and that "A Belle of the Sierras" was a typical New England girl. She had met in London several of that type. She gave me most delightful historiettes of the life of Lord and Lady Holland at Holland House, and of the visit of Louis Napoleon to the Queen, and how after him came his great favorite, the Countess Castiglioni, who put castor oil on her beautiful hair; and they called her "Castor-oil-ogni" ever after. The Marquis d'Azeglio happened to be at Aix that Summer, and she was full of his twenty-two years in England as Italian Minister, and his devotion to Lady Castleton, which kept him from marrying. He was the lesser brother—his great brother being Massimo d'Azeglio, they called him "Minimo." He was to me a very amusing little man, steeped in courts, and was of great service to me at Turin, where I went to see the wedding of the Duke d'Aosta to Letitia Bonaparte, his niece. I happened to be describing this charming fête to Miss Ricardo. She was a little offended at me for saying, with true American *sang froid* and impertinence: "Yes, I made great use of the Marquis at Turin."

"Now," said she, "have you no better phrase to use in regard to a one-thousand-year-old title, than that you 'made use' of him? Say that he was *very polite* to you."

"Yes," I said, "you are right. I was very American, was I not?"

"Yes, you were," said she, not altogether pleased.

"But," I said, "did the Marquis tell you what I did for him?—that I took him in to supper with the Queen?"

"That ought not to have happened. Yet it did, I know, for he told me of it himself. And he said it was only one of the many extraordinary adventures of the Americans, who, being related to Gianotti by marriage, get these favors."

"But," said I, "Miss Ricardo, if Americans are well-mannered and agreeable to you, why do you not

wish them to have the society of Queens?" "Because I don't," said Miss Ricardo. "You are too new; you have no reverence for title, no reverence for anything. Why," said she, "you speak of thrones and dynasties as if they are things of yesterday, and of hobnobbing with sovereigns as if it is a matter of a moment. Now, I have known very great English people who have come over here and spent years on the Continent, and have never seen so much royalty in their lives as you saw at that wedding at Turin. And yet you were not at all impressed."

"That is, you see, because I am a royalty myself," said I. But she did not like that tone, and I dropped it. Far more agreeable was it for me to make *her* talk, the dear Tory old lady.

"Oh!" said she, "how Dizzy hated the Americans! I was astonished to hear Lord Aberdare speak *so patiently* of them last night at the Doctor's dinner."

"Yes," said I, "he had been in America, and at some splendid dinners. He was telling me of them while you were talking to Lord Portarlington."

"He had been at dinners in your country?" she asked. "Why, do you have any servants over there, and any good cooking?"

I found someone had told her an amusing skit, every word of which she had believed, as English old ladies are apt to do, about our savage ways. So I led Lord Aberdare to describe a very beautiful series of entertainments in New York, and especially the flowers at one of Mrs. Astor's dinners. As he was a delightful character, one of the most brilliant scholars and one of the best entertained men in London, Miss Ricardo believed him. But she was painfully confused in her logic as to how anybody who lived in a country of such contradictions could have a good dinner every day.

Hamilton Aidé came to Aix during these Summers, and as he was a picked man of countries, I went to

him in my wonder and asked him to explain the inconsistency of the English utter lack of comprehension of the truly comfortable and even splendid life in our American cities.

"Oh," said he. "Logic is not the forte of Miss Ricardo's mind; and besides, you know England and America have really been enemies always since 1812. It was only the wisdom and coolness of Prince Albert which saved the English Cabinet from recognizing the South in 1864, and that would have injured both countries; but I, Hamilton Aidé, wanted it done, because I hated America and wished it broken in two, although I knew that our safety was in having you *our* friend, and the makeweight to Russia."

I laughed and said: "Mr. Aidé, I hope you will come to America and write a book about us, and do us justice, for *you* can."

So he came, the elegant littérateur, with Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, and he produced a very successful comedy, of which Dr. Brachet was the hero. Mrs. Stanley had been Miss Dolly Tennant, a very charming girl. I can see her now sitting on a hillside at Aix-les-Bains, swinging her hat. She and her mother were full of the most gentle and pleasing graces, and she had a charming talent with her pencil. Stanley had not a "manner" in the world; he was one of Miss Ricardo's typical Americans. Found by James Gordon Bennett as a helper in the *Herald* office, he was given the chance to go to Africa, where his persistent dash made him an immortal; but the returning hero is not always the person for a dinner. I gave them all a dinner and a reception and an opera party here, as they had been very kind to me in England; but Stanley did not come, broke all his engagements and behaved as one of Miss Ricardo's typical Americans would have done.

Hamilton Aidé wrote a book, in which he described only one American entertainment, which was a party given in a church parlor out in Oregon—a sort of church sociable—while

he did not speak of the most lovely breakfasts in New York, particularly one given by Mrs. Whitney, the prettiest, the most elegant thing possible, with orchids all over the house, and Mrs. V. R. Cruger and other great beauties at the table.

I was so angry at this that I wrote to Mr. Aidé and asked the reason of such an omission.

"You were so amiable," I said, "as to regret at Aix the utter lack among the English of comprehension of our American civilization; now you have come here and have seen that we are as civilized as anybody, but you have not said so in your book. Why?"

He answered:

"My dear Mrs. Sherwood, we do not come to America to see London and Paris; we come to it to gain the original touch, the *Catawba flavor*, the thing which we miss in Europe. The parties in New York were far more florally magnificent than in London. I must say I missed *something*. I found exaggeration of Worth costumes, of Francatelli dinners, of the grandiose hospitality of dukes, but I found nothing new but replete feeding. Now, in Oregon I did find much that is new, and I tried to describe it. In a visit to Mr. Lowell, at Cambridge, I found a perfect simplicity and heard the elegant talk of a scholar. Will you forgive me if I thought New York monstrously ugly?"

Well, so much for Mr. Aidé. He had not reached the American real life. He could not see us, and he did not wish to. I afterward wrote to Henry James about his book. Although having lived in England for thirty years, Henry James wrote back:

"Why did you try to convert an Englishman? I never try. Let them die in their sins. Between them and ourselves there is a great gulf fixed. We shall never quite understand each other."

There was one man, an American, who was always understood, appreciated and admired by English people, and that was Mr. Junius Morgan, the father of our millionaire philan-

thropist, Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. Whether in London, at his princely house at Prince's Gate, or at Dover House, the most beautiful of suburban residences, where I dined often of a Sunday, Mr. Morgan was the most popular and delightful of men. I have just been reading in that agreeable book, "Recollections of Sir Algernon West," of a trip to Corsica, in the *Pandora*, with Mr. Morgan, of whom the author says: "It would be impossible to imagine a more delightful host than Mr. Morgan, who was absolutely devoid of the unconscious insolence of wealth which is possessed by many millionaires." He describes a delightful visit, with Mr. Morgan, to *Ile Rousse*, on the island of Corsica, to a private secretary of Louis Napoleon. They saw many Bonaparte pictures and relics of the family. They saw afterward Ajaccio, the birthplace and home of Napoleon, the furniture old and broken, and a niece of Bonaparte living there in great poverty. I dare say Mr. Morgan left her an independence.

"Mr. Morgan," says Sir Algernon West, "is received everywhere by the French with enthusiasm, for he made the first great loan to them, at the time of the siege of Paris." And so he was received in London after the breakdown of the first Iron Mountain bridge, at St. Louis, of the indebtedness on which he paid every cent that any Englishman had lost by trusting to his representations. An Englishman's heart is said to be very near his pocket, but the charm and the fascination of Mr. Morgan were in himself, and not in his pocketbook. I saw much of him at Monte Carlo, the last year or so before his lamented death. The Mediterranean was dazzlingly blue, and the sun entrancingly warm. There is no such Paradise of Sinners as Monte Carlo, with the long, tangled roses hanging over the rocks into the sea. I was there repeatedly in March—and how much more agreeable it is than anywhere else in that villainous month, with Nature in the loveliest of caprices, the music absolutely delightful, the company the gayest in

the universe! The Prince of Wales, Sir Arthur Sullivan, and many of the beauties, American and English, were there. Yet of all those brilliant days, I enjoyed most the hour of five, when I always took tea with Mr. Morgan. There was a man who could have brought the two nations together, but he never made them comprehend each other. I suppose he never tried!

American churchmen are very popular in England, but I have heard them complain of the lack of comprehension of the elegance of home life in America. A young lady who spends much time in America, and whose home is in London, explained this misunderstanding better than anyone I ever knew.

"We are mostly poor in the circle I move in," said she; "we cannot spend money as you Americans do, and we think, as we hear the Americans talk, that they are extravagant, and showy, and not so sincere in their tastes as Englishwomen. Of course, we go to the great houses to see the pictures and the fine rooms, but we never expect to *possess* them; so we try to cultivate other tastes—botany, music and water-colors." (Every Englishwoman that I knew could paint in water-colors. I know but very few American women who can.) "Now, we do not see or know your intimate home life in the country, as you do ours, because you are such great travelers. You spend Summers at quiet places, like Malvern and Matlock Bath and the English Lakes, or on the Isle of Wight, and therefore you know us *thoroughly*, and all about us. When we cross we go to Newport or Saratoga, and to Niagara and California, and we learn very little between; but I do know that my cousin comes over from America, every Summer, to live on the Isle of Wight, so as to save buying her daughters expensive toilets for Newport." So much for one criticism!

There is a very important difference between the expense of bringing out a young girl in England and in America. The one set of white gowns which

does for a young English girl composes a very cheap toilet compared to that of a young American. What can the mother of five daughters, with the pay of an English curate, hope to do in England for her girls?

Of course, almost all the marriages of young Englishmen to American girls have been largely influenced by money. The great fortunes that have gone over there have opened the way for American heiresses, who are much admired and respected; but those fortunes will not bring us together as nations. The families of these very girls are less prone to care for Americans than any other. They, the girls, become English, and do not attempt to make the English see the virtues of the Americans. Even so fine a writer as Mrs. Humphry Ward begins her last novel in *Harper's Magazine* with a mistake. She makes her American girl very badly dressed, which she never *could* have been. She would have been shocked, the American, at the unbecoming clothes of the English girl. And the author says, "We must be kind to her, for our Boston friends were nice and kind to us. They gave us so much to eat that we felt as if we could never eat any more!"

Oh, shades of Emerson, Prescott, Lowell, Longfellow! was there nothing better to say of Boston than that?

When in London I met Bret Harte, still rosy, young and vivacious, in spite of his very white hair. He was living with an English family, where, as he said, "you have peace." "Well, well," said I, "how do you compare life here and in New York?"

"In England," said he, "you always know what you are to have for breakfast, and when you are to have it. In New York *I never* knew." "But," said I, "does the difference go no further?" "Yes," said he, "but a great deal is gained if you start fair. There is a radical misapprehension and a gruff determination to not understand us—our social system baffles them, our newness confuses their oldness. It affects the court, the camp, the grove, the

solid mahogany and the conservative muffin bell."

Then there are social distinctions here. The life of such a woman as Miss Frances Willard, chosen to be the great friend of Lady Henry Somerset, gave to all the friends of that lady unending occasions for the questions, why and how do you do thus and so? Miss Willard had never sustained relations with fashionable society, and when any questions on social points came up she knew nothing. Now, a literary woman from England, Miss Martineau, by way of example, would have known much more. Such women as Miss Thackeray and Mrs. Richie have always held a social position of the highest. Mrs. Stowe never knew and never cared, so that she and her husband left innumerable anecdotes behind them which confused the noble set about the Duchess of Sutherland. It is, however, all plain sailing to anyone who has a sense of humor and a joyous and hospitable hostess, and good conversationalists always get on well together. They like us to do a great deal of talking, and, to do both sides justice, the Americans are not at all averse to doing the talking. The voices of American women are not so beautiful as those of the English; but Americans are more fluent, as a rule, and often witty.

Here is an instance of unfairness: At Aix-les-Bains, in the Summer of 1888, I think it was, came a very handsome young couple to the hotel, and joined the Brachet set, which meant perpetual picnics and dinners and a round of gaiety. They were introduced by a very noble Countess, a great friend of the Doctor's.

One day at a sort of tea, given, I believe, by Mr. Aidé—I know he was there—at Rumpelmeyer's, a local tea house, there came a pause in the merrymaking. A gentleman had whispered to the pretty young bride. She turned very pale and rose to leave the table. Her husband crossed the room and attacked the man. "What do you mean?" said he. "I mean," said the gentleman, "that you both leave this room."

Of course, there was a bad quarter of an hour, and they did leave; and then we heard that they were a runaway couple, and that he had left a young wife behind him, and taken *her* young friend with him.

We never saw him again, or her either. I heard that it was a most unpardonable piece of villainy and impudence, and why the Countess endorsed them, bringing them into the very choicest set of her intimate friends, I never knew.

"I cannot forgive that of the Countess," said Lady McCastle, "for it was such an *American* thing to do!"

I pursued this particular remark and asked her why.

She said: "Oh, you never care anything about divorces, or runaway matches, do you?" I was very indignant, though I did not know but that she rather had me there. There are certain attacks that had better be parried. The "yes" or "no" does not always do. But I do not remember this as an "*American* thing to do," nor did I admit that it was such.

At the Queen's Ball, after presentation, in 1886, a number of English people standing near me commenced commenting on the politeness of the Prince to Americans, and especially on the fact that he had that evening danced with a young American lady. "To tell you the truth," said one, "I do not like all this kow-towing to the Americans. I think it is all very well to have a political peace between the two countries, if we *can*, for they are always trying to get an advantage of us, but as to social equality, never; and as to seeing them lead off with our Prince, it is shocking to my English heart."

"But," said another man, "remember we have married them freely—two duchesses, two countesses, and I do not know how many younger sons."

"Yes," said the first speaker, who I afterward learned was the Earl of Sefton, "they have brought money in where it was needed. That excuses a great deal, but it does not excuse the first gentleman in the land for

dancing with an American girl at the Queen's Ball."

"Perhaps H.R.H. is in love with her."

"So much the worse," said the belted Earl. "I have always admired Labby for his caricatures in *Truth* of the Prince as a cross baby, with a heap of broken toys on a shelf at the top of his head, labeled 'American Beauties'—such a set of broken-nosed dolls as they were!"

"Oh, not quite so bad as that," said his now reasonable compatriot.

My friend who was with me had an American daughter-in-law, and I looked at her to see if she was not hurt; but she was not. She smiled. "That is the way we all felt," said she, "but we are consoled now. At least, we do not talk so loud!"

She was a very cosmopolitan and amiable woman, reasonable and willing to be amused. She accepted the inevitable, but I do not believe that she thought us half-civilized, then; perhaps she does, now.

Another strange misconception is the literary animosity. Carlyle said of one misfortune of ours: "I never can care what happens to the Americans, a set of pirates." Tennyson was not much more amiable, and as for Ruskin, he could not bear us. Browning told me he had to get over a very strong antipathy. The Storys won him over, as they did many English people.

Remembering, as we do, that Longfellow sold many more copies of his poems there than here, and that Tennyson and Browning sold more copies here than there, they all acknowledge that the displeasure seems to have been external. But it was very real. It was prejudice, and not a lack of comprehension. It was largely social—a sort of contempt. Dickens made the first real assault in "Martin Chuzzlewit." His *Elijah Pogram* was, however, so masterly, so Hogarthian a sketch, that it has passed into a portrait of a Western demagogue, recognized here as well as there. Poor Dickens, who made that splendid and feeling retraction in all the subsequent editions of "Martin

Chuzzlewit," to his American readers, did not hesitate to speak of himself as an "ignorant young dandy," at that time, which he certainly was. Thackeray, who knew enough to know better, after all the friendly intimacy that grew out of his lectures here on the four Georges, went back to England, and, during the sad early days of our war, drew a caricature in the *Cornhill* of an eagle with a broken wing, and called Washington a "successful rebel." He afterward said that he was "always glad of our national misfortunes." Miss Martineau, who had come over here as an abolitionist, deserted the party of principle and went back on her old friends, the cotton spinners. Kipling abused New York before his last illness. Perhaps he does not now. One is tempted to say, "*Perfide Albion!*" indeed. Yet, when one talks with such delightful people as Lord and Lady Pauncefoot at Washington, or with Lord Rosebery, one cannot feel otherwise than kindly toward everything English.

When Count Boni de Castellane married Miss Anna Gould, his father and mother came over here with him, and charmed everyone. They were really gentleman and lady, yet the elder Count went back to Paris and wrote for the *Figaro*: "Americans are, some of them, very nice people, but there is no such thing known there as society." Now, *isn't* there? I think there is. This from our old friends, the French, the countrymen of Lafayette, was rather hard. We can only hope he would have thought better had he stayed longer. Having no "leisure class" here, as Henry James says, foreigners do not see our society at an advantage.

When I once went to a very beautiful house in Westmoreland to pay a visit, I found everything most congenial. A happier and more clever family never made earth brighter. The place was simply perfect, my host and hostess enchanting. But there was a disagreeable brother, and he "went for me," as an American, on all our national faults. I thought

of this motto, "Beware of the entrance to a quarrel." I did not hear him or notice his tone for a day or two, but he became so aggressive that my dear hostess followed me to my room when I was about retiring, and said that she "hoped I did not mind Charles, as he was an Anglophobe, and very anti-American;" that he also had nervous dyspepsia. "He is almost as rude as —" and she mentioned a well-known instance of aggressive manners as if it were rather an aristocratic peculiarity—"and we regret it; but you don't mind *Charles*," said she. I told her I always minded rudeness, and that I did not like to have him ask me, in such an accusing spirit, why the Americans did such and such things.

"Why, I should like to know, do your people always eat with their knives?" was one of his remarks.

"Yes," said My Lady, looking pained, "that was very coarse of Charles, for I have never seen *you* eat with your knife."

Well, Lord Charles was a type of many a rude brother; but when you are receiving every kindness and favor and hospitality from the rest of the family, you cannot notice the Lord Charleses.

Mr. Motley used to say, during our war, that the only people in England who really liked Americans were the royal family, the dukes and the duchesses and the higher aristocracy; and they do. And if you wish for a model of good manners, watch the children of Queen Victoria.

Once, at a very beautiful country place, I asked the Countess if I might see her housekeeping, and her still room, the kitchens and the offices. She was greatly pleased, for she had a model dairy, and she brought her housekeeper to see me one morning. This functionary, stout and red-faced, in a moire antique, made me a curtsey that I wish I could emulate, but never shall, and told me she should be "proud to show me at my pleasure;" and would I take a cup of tea with her in her own room? I never enjoyed anything more. Mrs. Elli-

cott, the housekeeper, dropped her h's, and had slipped right out of Dickens. She asked me about her nieces, who had come to America to go into service, and wished she had gone when she was young. I told her I thought she had done well to stay where she was. The comfort, the neatness and the picturesqueness of these spacious pantries, the pretty little scullery maids and the preserved currants and gooseberries, reminded me of Miss Ferrier, Miss Austen, Miss Edgeworth, Miss Yonge and other English writers, and my own namesake, Mrs. Sherwood, who wrote "Little Henry and His Bearer." It was all like our old Sunday-school books. Of such is the charm of England. It is grandfather's house to us. The next season I met my noble hostess at Aix-les-Bains again, and she brought me some dried lavender from the stores of Mrs. Ellicott. "Oh," said she, "I have a compliment for you. Mrs. Ellicott says you are a very nice lady for an American."

I paid a visit to some friends at Winchfield, within a few miles of Canon Kingsley's parish, Eversley, and they drove me over to see the grave of the most delightful of writers, Charles Kingsley. This world-renowned poet and story-writer, the author of "The Water Babies," I had known, and also his daughter Rose, in America, and I think they understood us; yes, I am sure they did.

In that "light which never was on sea or land"—that which falls about the English Lakes and the home of Wordsworth—we seemed to come to something akin to our own scenery, and at Matlock Bath we went to an American wedding, celebrated in the prettiest of little churches. The bride-to-be was very beautiful, and walked over lilies-of-the-valley and forget-me-nots gathered by the village children; and the rector, who afterward breakfasted with us, said to me, in a whispered aside: "Why, she is very beautiful, and so well dressed! and so is her mother. Are they not very unusually refined?" "No, not *unusually* so," said I. "I never saw an Ameri-

can before," he confessed. Now, would you believe that!

"Oh," said I, "you have seen hundreds before, only there is no distinctive hall mark by which you know us. Did you think we were black—or red?"

Thus marked is the social distance between the two nationalities, that are now so friendly—so effusive, indeed, in their love for each other. And so will it always be. Fortunately for us, hospitality is the English people's trade mark and device, and they cannot help inviting us to their most splendid as well as to their humblest homes. They cannot keep away from us their inimitable art treasures nor their beautiful visions of green turf and flowers. No matter how Lord Charles may ask impertinent questions, there will always be more well-mannered Lord Roseberys than are required to go round, while there will be the English women to make life radiant—and a well-bred Englishwoman is a very high type.

The first visit of mine to England, under the admirable introduction of Mr. Motley, opened for me the English home—that splendid traditional home of the best virtues and the highest intelligence—and also the glories of the London season; and the experience has been often repeated. I spent seven seasons in London, and met at Aix-les-Bains some of the choicest specimens of the glorious English women, like Lady Somers, the mother of Lady Henry Somerset; Lady Sefton, Lady Doneraile, Lady Augustus FitzClarence, the Hon. Mrs. Wellesley, Lady Constance Leslie, the ladies of the noble family of Cecil, the royal family, with the Queen at their head (whom I only saw go by). Later on I knew very well the Princess Louise and the Duchess of Connaught, and I met many of the gems of the literary society of England on my subsequent visits, presented to me by Mr. Lowell and Mr. Phelps.

Always I have been struck by the characteristic inability to quite understand or grasp our peculiar civilization, our differences, just as Mr.

Depew, General Horace Porter and Mr. Choate have found that an Englishman cannot understand an American joke. Lord Houghton's advice

was admirable: "How can I make an Englishman comprehend an American?" I asked.
"Don't try," said His Lordship.



LOVE AND LACE

"**L**OVE and lace, they live together,"
Runs the ancient phrase.
Is it true, I wonder whether,
In our days?

Puffed about the baby's face
Like a ruffled dove;
Nurse says, as she smoothes the lace,
"It's a love!"

Now the maiden, eyes aglow,
Lays the filmy fold
High across her bosom's snow,
As of old.

Then the bride, with happy smile,
Hid in gauzy sheen,
Sweeps in lace-clouds up the aisle,
Like a queen.

But the lace that love loves best,
Yellow, old and rare,
Half conceals the young wife's breast,
White and fair.

ABEL HOMAN.



A POPULAR GIRL

CHARLEY—Is she one of the girls you can kiss if you want to?

JACK—She's more than that. She's one of the girls you don't have to kiss if you don't want to.



IN HER BIRTHDAY BOOK

REQUEST that you may have my name?
I'm 'shamed 'twas left to you to make it;
But I have tried for weeks, in vain,
To dare to ask you if you'd take it.

TRUMAN ROBERTS ANDREWS.

"AN AMETHYST REMEMBRANCE"

By McVay Sumner

THE morning-room of a metropolitan hotel. A young woman in fashionable street costume is seated near a window glancing anxiously at a clock on a mantel. Through a door of the large reception-room comes a young man, who turns toward her eagerly, stops suddenly, and stammers.

HE—I beg your pardon—

SHE—Why—why—Jim!

HE—Frances!

SHE (*agitatedly*)—Where did you come from? Are you living in New York? Oh, Jim, I—

HE (*with amazement*)—Frances, what are you doing here? I—I mistook you for someone else—your face away from the light that way—and I didn't realize it was you until—why, I hardly do now! Are you sure it is?

SHE (*with an excited little laugh*)—Yes, Jim, it's I, but—but you startled me so, and I can't think straight yet. I thought you were in Austria. I heard you were. I am just here myself—the boat came in yesterday. I never thought of seeing you again—like this, you know, and—(*incoherently*)—and everything! But are you here in New York to stay—living, I mean?

HE—I'm here, yes; and I'm living. (*After a pause.*) Sit down, and (*glancing at clock*) let's talk for a few minutes. Are you going out, though?

SHE—No, I'm just waiting for Mr. Studdington, my husband's brother; he is coming to lunch with me here. Jim, how strange it seems to see you again! I can hardly believe my eyes.

HE (*without looking at her*)—Yes,

it—does—seem—strange—to be here together. (*After a moment.*) Are—are you quite well?

SHE (*laughing, but with embarrassment*)—Yes, Jim, I'm very well, thank you; and I don't need to ask if you are. You're looking the best I ever saw you. But tell me about yourself and what you are doing, and everything.

HE—The same old thing, only more of it. (*With an effort.*) Are you stopping at this hotel? How is Mr.—er—Studdington? Is he with you here?

SHE (*distressedly*)—Oh, Jim! didn't you know? He died, Jim—two years after—after we were married. He was not strong, you know. It is three years ago, now—

HE (*slowly, with averted face*)—No, I didn't know.

SHE (*looking out of window*)—You've been away somewhere, haven't you, all these years? Nobody seemed to know where you were—that is, nobody that I knew. (*With confusion.*) I've not seen you, you know, for five years and a half, and that's a long time.

HE—Yes, it is.

SHE (*turning toward him*)—And so much has happened since then—so much, Jim. The world has been such a different place from what it was that Summer at Longmere—and—and I think I've gotten old.

HE (*looking intently at her*)—You deceive your looks.

SHE (*smiling*)—Don't flatter me, Jim. But tell me where were you, and what have you been doing, and are you here to stay?

HE (*slowly*)—I got my paper to

send me abroad, five years and a half ago. I went pretty much everywhere. I heard of you in London. I didn't write over my own name—I didn't think it worth while—and I took the name of a place that—that I had liked. Then I came home and got my stuff together for a publisher who was good enough to want it—and that's all.

SHE—Oh, Jim, is that your book?—the one that's advertised everywhere, by "Taylor Rhodes?"

HE—Yes.

SHE—And you signed "Taylor Rhodes" because of *our* road—I mean the old Taylor road from Longmere?

HE (*looking steadily at her*)—Yes, because of *our* road.

SHE (*with confusion*)—I never thought, Jim, of that—and yet—

HE—Thinking was never your strong point.

SHE (*flushing*)—Thank you, Jim; but don't trouble to be cruel to me. I can't be hurt by it now.

HE—I don't mean to be cruel, Frances. Forgive me; I was only thinking—

SHE (*softly*)—Of what, Jim?

HE (*carelessly*)—Oh, of things in general.

SHE (*still more softly*)—Of Longmere?

HE—Yes, of Longmere.

SHE (*after a pause*)—Jim, I've often thought of the time when I should see you again, for I always knew it would come, and I always thought that when it did come I should try to say something to you to make you forget my heartless folly of five years ago, and—and ask you to forgive it—if you can.

HE (*slowly*)—I bear you no malice, Frances.

SHE—I am so glad. But (*anxiously*) do you forgive me—for everything—for that last day, you know (*softly*), that day you went away?

HE (*still more slowly*)—I don't know how to answer you, Frances.

SHE (*quickly*)—Then you don't.

HE (*steadily*)—I forgive you, yes; but I remember. I don't want to; I've tried hard not to. I've fought

hard to forget it all—and you—and I've succeeded in getting—numb. There doesn't seem to be anything left to forgive with; but I can't help remembering. I loved you, you know.

SHE (*agitatedly*)—Yes, yes, I know.

HE—And I thought you loved me. I believed what you said—

SHE—But, Jim—

HE (*interrupting her*)—I believed you. I would have staked my life on you. And then that day, the day we walked down the Taylor road, you told me, you remember, certain stories that someone had told you of me—stories that weren't creditable to me, I'll admit, and would reflect rather badly on the character of a model young man—which I never claimed to be. I might have lied, and you would have believed me; but I decided that a fair-minded girl, such as I thought you were, would prefer the simple truth and make allowance for the imbecile foolishness that attacks most men sooner or later, and so I owned up.

SHE—If I had only known, Jim—

HE—I owned up. And then you said something about always having thought me pure and noble, and that the disappointment in finding me human was more than you could bear—or words to that effect—and you didn't think you could marry me.

SHE—But, Jim, a girl, you know—those things always seem so awful to a girl—and I was just out of school, with different ideals, and was very uncharitable. I'm afraid—

HE (*looking at the rug*)—I don't know what they teach in girls' schools, but you were twenty-one, and hadn't been brought up in a convent, and I was twenty-five and had brought myself up. (*After a few minutes' pause.*) As soon as I met you, I loved you with a passion that burnt my heart bare of everything else, and the only shame in my soul was that I had nothing to offer you. (*Pause.*) And my heart withered the day I had to ask you if you would wait for me a year—two, three years, perhaps—until I could get on with the paper and be one of the big men on it. It seemed

to me that the lack of money was worse than the lack of morals or anything else. (*Rises, walks to window and looks down on the street.*) I can't see, now, how it was that old Tweedham let me go abroad for the paper. I only remember going up to him and asking him, for God's sake, to send me away somewhere as far as he could. And he did, God bless him!

SHE—Jim, I was very young, and—

HE—That didn't help me any. And then one day, months afterward, when I was in Rome, I went in to look over the American papers, and there I saw that you were married—married on the first page, with a six-line head, to a man well known in New York—to a man with oceans of money—and an Englishman at that! And then—well, that's all.

SHE—I don't know what to say to you, Jim, or how to justify myself. I did love you, but I was so disappointed in you. And then Mr. Studdington came, and they all expected me to marry him, and—it's so hard for a girl, Jim! You don't know how the world—the real world—seems to a girl who has been gently born and carefully reared, or how the knowledge of it stuns her. She isn't used to it, as a man is, and when the knowledge of it comes home to her, it dazes her, confounds her ideas and confuses her judgment. She is usually honest to herself, but she doesn't know.

HE (*looking directly at her*)—Can she learn it in six months, and yet be honest to herself? Or does she only learn the value of ignorance?

SHE—Don't, Jim! Please don't! I had loved you so intensely; and when I found out that you were not all I had thought you, when I knew you had done—

HE (*interrupting*)—Those things I should not have done, you were prostrated with grief that your judgment had been mistaken, and you sacrificed me in consequence. You were shocked at my immorality, Frances—shocked at me, who never loved, nor

pretended to love, anyone before I met you; but you—you vowed that you loved me, and—(*calmly*)—well, did it ever occur to you what you did?

SHE (*slowly*)—If I should tell you, Jim, that these five years have been a continual atonement, that I have never been happy, and that I—I have always remembered, would you believe me?

HE (*firmly*)—Yes, for I know it is the truth.

SHE—And you will forgive me, Jim?

HE—Yes.

SHE (*softly*)—And—Jim—do you care—now?

HE (*looking away*)—Frances, I am going to be married.

SHE (*after a long pause*)—Jim—is it a girl or—or a woman?

HE—A young girl, Frances, just out of school. She believes in me. I shall never tell her anything to spoil her faith.

SHE (*rising and standing at window*)—You are very wise, Jim, and you have found out that women like to be lied to—it saves so many heart-aches—and each one saved is such a gain, Jim, such a gain. (*Turns and laughs lightly.*) Did that sound all right, Jim; natural, I mean? For here comes Mr. Studdington. (*Advancing.*) You are late, Arthur.

MR. STUDDINGTON—Did you wait long for me, my dear? So sorry, you know, but affairs of importance—

SHE—This is Mr. Dumont, Arthur, a very old friend of mine. We happened to meet here, quite accidentally, and have spent such a pleasant half-hour, talking over old times.

MR. STUDDINGTON—Delighted to know you, my dear fellow. Any of Frances's friends, you know! Ah, my dear, I'm afraid you are more fatigued after the voyage than you thought. She looks a bit *ennuyée*, don't you think, Mr. Dumont, even for a young woman who has been the belle of a London season?

HE—Mrs. Studdington is always charming.

SHE—I've been congratulating Mr.

Dumont, Arthur. He is "Taylor Rhodes"—just think of it! and he's—he's going to be married, too.

MR. STUDDINGTON—Really! My dear fellow, I congratulate you also, most heartily. Success always meets one with both hands out and gives a double welcome. It's the fellow who is down that gets the kicks. This is really a very happy meeting. You will lunch with us, Mr. Dumont, will you not?—and continue your reminiscences with Frances?

HE—Thanks, but I am awaiting Mrs. Steadwell and her daughter, who are to lunch with me here.

MR. STUDDINGTON—Ah, indeed! And is it Miss Steadwell who—by Jove, you are a lucky fellow, sir! Mrs. Steadwell is an old friend of

mine, and if it please you we will make one table, and have the pleasure of a toast to the pretty fiancée. I congratulate you again.

HE—I shall be delighted if (*looking toward FRANCES*) Mrs. Studdington—

SHE—By all means, yes. I—I shall be so glad to know her. Just think, Arthur, it is only a little more than five years ago that I was just out of school, and—and engaged to be married. But (*steadily*) that was a very long time ago.

MR. STUDDINGTON (*fondly*)—Nothing could be so very long ago with you, my dear. But is not that Mrs. Steadwell and her daughter coming through the large room? Shall we go to meet them? (*They go out.*)



HOW DID SHE KNOW?

HOW did she know he thought of her,
His heart was all her own?
That when he heard
Her smallest word,
His inmost soul with love was stirred,
He dreamed of her alone?

How did she know that when she passed,
Or brushed him with her dress,
His eyes were filled,
His pulses thrilled,
His heart with rapture almost stilled—
Tell me, how did she guess?

How did she know that all her life
With him would be a song?
That he'd be true,
Forever, too—
Alas for her! she thought she knew,
But she was wrong!

LOTTA PRENTISS STREET.



LARGE DAMAGES

SIMMONS—He says he met his wife by accident.

JIMMONS—I hope he was carrying an accident policy at the time.

THE MANEUVERS OF MADGE

By Arabella Kenealy

THE hotel omnibus had proceeded some minutes in silence—that is, silence so far as its human occupants were concerned; noisy enough it had been in the crunch of its great wheels on the harsh road and the pounding of its horses' hoofs.

The train had been late in arriving, and the consciousness that they had lost their dinner, added to the nerve irritability ensuing upon a four hours' railroad journey in the dust of a Florida day, oppressed the silent travelers.

Then: "Beastly nuisance not being able to get tea! Why aren't all railroads compelled by law to run dining cars?" a smart, good-looking girl snapped, from her corner.

"Oh, well, you haven't got much to grumble about, seeing that you've consumed nearly a whole pound of chocolates," the youth opposite retorted.

"All the more reason for wanting tea," the girl insisted. "I'm so thirsty I can scarcely talk."

Her opponent shrugged his shoulders.

"It's your own fault," he said, disagreeably; "you should have stopped at the first half-pound."

The girl for answer poked him sharply on the ankles with the pointed ferrule of her umbrella. The action might have passed for playfulness but for a savage, half-suppressed growl on the part of the victim.

"Vixen!" he muttered, with a glance toward the lady in the further corner, a glance indicating that but for her his language would certainly have been less temperate.

The girl laughed. Having caused

somebody else to smart for her vexations, she appeared relieved, and resettling herself in her corner, leaned back with an air of resignation.

The omnibus proceeded on its way once more in silence.

Its fourth occupant, a middle-aged, portly man, lay back in his corner with his eyes half-closed. The portion of them that was open had rested with vision cruelly clear on the little scene just acted. Above the irritation of his lost dinner and the boredom of the journey one thought was paramount: a thought that had been paramount many an hour of many a day of late. What a fool he had been, what a fool was any man, to incur the responsibilities and annoyances of family life! Mr. Ambrose had married, somewhat early in his career, a girl for whom he cared but little. She had been handsome—like her daughter in the corner; she had been accomplished—unlike her daughter in the corner, who despised all else besides outdoor sports. She had brought him a small dowry that had proved of service in those first years of early struggle, but otherwise, what had he gained? Eighteen years of treadmill drudgery, butchers' bills, bakers' bills, doctors' bills, milliners' bills, taxes, school bills and the worries attaching to measles and teething. And what to recompense?

A fortnight of wedlock had shown him that he and his bride had not a taste in common. He had come back to his work a sadder and a wiser man, but a man who could profit him nothing by his new wisdom. Yet he was not a romantic person; he had not dreamed of sentimental soarings or of

ineffable delights. When he returned from his honeymoon he put the circumstances to himself in his plain and businesslike way. "It was the blue tulle dress at the Robinsons' dance that did it," he reflected, sighing. "And after all, it is companionship a man needs. If only——"

But the "if only" in this case had not worn a blue tulle dress. In point of fact, she had not been that evening at the Robinsons'.

The drudgery was over. Now he was a rich man and a widower. The uncongenial partnership had been dissolved by death. He sighed with a half-abashed sense of relief. He had been a widower for two years, yet he still sighed with that feeling of agreeable deliverance.

But the serenity of his new condition was not undisturbed. The uncongenial partnership had left its penalties. It was true Madge let him alone and spent the greater portion of her time away from home, visiting, golfing, playing tennis. Cyril was at college and never, on any occasion on which he had a choice, spent a vacation at home. Indeed, were it not for his expenses, his ever-recurring expenses, from babyhood to early manhood, and the vista of still further expenses of starting and probably failing in life, Mr. Ambrose reflected, cynically, he might as well have been son-less.

To use one of Cyril's own expressions, in thinking over the situation Mr. Ambrose failed to see "where he came in," further than to pay bills, forever pay bills, chaperon Madge and listen to Madge's and Cyril's perpetual squabbles.

When Madge was four his heart had yearned to her. She had appeared so gay and pretty, with her curls and russet cheeks; and somebody had taught the child a winsome trick of hugging, with the result that more than once, when her soft little arms tightened about his neck and he felt the flutter of her petal lips against his face, Ambrose had expe-

rienced, with a half-ecstatic expansion of the chest, a sense that perhaps, after all, it had been worth while.

But Madge had long since ceased to hug him, and beyond the prescribed and perfunctory peck that accompanied her "Well, pops," on her returns from the visits or voyages which stood to him for further incursions on his bank book, Madge gave him now no occasion for fatherly yearnings. And if anything were to happen to him! Mr. Ambrose laughed harshly and unpleasantly at the thought. Cyril would make ducks and drakes of his hard-earned fortune; and Madge, with a dry and handsome eye, would order smart mourning, and possibly relinquish sundry golf or tennis meetings in the interests of decorum.

Meantime, the lady in the opposite corner of the omnibus, herself in shadow, had scarcely taken her eyes from his face. Once or twice a half-sigh escaped her. She sent furtive, timid glances, under cover of the dusk, from parent to children. Withdrawn into the shadow, her black-draped form was scarcely noticeable, and none of the party vouchsafed her a look of interest.

The omnibus stopped.

"Thank goodness!" Madge ejaculated. But there was more of irritation than of gratitude in her tones.

Cyril, whose shins presumably still smarted, vouchsafed her no word, but, gathering up his golf bag, tumbled out of the opened door. His sister followed nimbly, Mr. Ambrose descending more leisurely. A sense of the civilities suddenly taking him, he turned back to give a glance, and, if need were, a hand to the lady in black.

Their eyes met.

"Can it be? Am I mistaken? Can it be Miss Warden?"

She extended, and withdrew in the same moment, a shy hand.

She smiled faintly. In the yellow light of the omnibus lamp she looked fatigued and pale.

"Yes, it is I," she said.

"Strangely enough—" Mr. Ambrose began, on an impulse. He ceased abruptly. He had been about to confess that she had occupied his thoughts some minutes earlier.

A trifle awkwardly they followed Madge and Cyril up the brilliantly illuminated steps and into the hall, where, dinner over, a company in evening dress smoked and chatted over coffee.

Here Madge and Cyril stood waiting them—Madge with that air of assertive assurance wherewith some types of women, underbred and overbred, announce that they have not the slightest intention of playing second fiddle to anybody!

After the usual parley in the office, and assignment of rooms, the new arrivals were informed that dinner would be served to them in the smaller dining-room in the course of some minutes.

"I sha'n't dress," Madge said.

They moved to the elevator, which Madge and Cyril entered, and where they seated themselves without ceremony. The quiet-mannered person in black, for whom their father stood aside with some *empressement*, did not interest them.

"First floor, ma'am," the elevator man insisted, respectfully, seeing that she had not risen with the rest of the party.

"My room is on the second floor," she stated.

"Why, I believe the idiot mistook her for our mother," she heard Madge scoff, with a note of mirth, as the trio passed down the corridor to their respective rooms. She was a timid woman, and she reconstructed her intention of dining with her fellow passengers. Instead, she rang her bell and ordered tea in her bedroom.

II

THE company assembled at the links was ultra-select, and was therefore slow to make acquaintance.

Cyril and Madge, despite their swag-

ger and their smart clothes, found themselves somewhat in the cold.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilton Sainsbury chanced, at this particular epoch, to be the vogue. The company was divided into two sets—those who were acquainted with the Sainsburys, and those who were not. Those who were not sat below the social salt. Madge was a sharp girl, and she gathered very shortly how the land lay. But Mrs. Sainsbury only thanked her curtly and turned aside when she flew to the rescue of a dropped ball of wool, or when she retrieved mislaid lorgnettes, opened doors or placed footstools. It was not at all to Madge's taste to do these things, being neither amiable nor obliging, but she had inherited some of the qualities that went to make her father a successful business man, and she fully intended to be successful.

Madge and Cyril made a point of presenting cold shoulders on every occasion to Miss Warden. It was not lost upon them that their father was displaying undue interest in this person, who, because she was neither assertive nor smart, appeared to them to be insignificant; nor was it lost upon them that this insignificant person who was neither smart nor assertive, was wont—that, of course, was to be expected of such persons—to be interested in the wealthy widower.

But Cyril and Madge had other plans for him. So Miss Warden's mild attempts at friendliness were summarily snuffed out.

"What a queer old thing she is!" protested Madge. "Quite prepared to be a mother to us. Actually suggested a shawl round my head the other evening after dinner, for fear I should take cold. What the—Thackeray—could it have been to her if I had taken cold!"

"Wonder where the gov'nor picked her up! In the ark, one might think," Cyril drawled.

"Oh, she was ages before the ark," asserted Madge. "Long before Noah women had given up wearing their hair in her ridiculous fashion."

In point of fact, Miss Warden was exactly forty-three, and was regarded by her friends as being still comely and attractive, if a trifle faded. She possessed a well-bred, graceful manner and a pleasing voice. Her figure was slender and straight, and, despite the strictures Madge and Cyril passed on the style of her hair, the locks were abundant and beautiful, and her manner of dressing them suited her features and a certain old-world air about her to perfection.

Mr. Ambrose obviously admired her, and made no effort to conceal his admiration. His eyes followed her, and indeed his feet did likewise, very much more frequently than Madge approved.

But as it presently turned out, their acquaintance with Miss Warden gave them the entrée to the Sainsbury set, an honor for which they would otherwise have vainly sighed.

For Mr. Sainsbury proved to have been an old friend of Mr. Warden senior, and the Sainsburys, on discovering this, could scarcely stir without Miss Warden for companion.

"So charmed to have come across you!" Madge overheard Mrs. Sainsbury say. "You must spare us some weeks at Glen Arch, remember, in the Summer. Mr. Sainsbury was devoted to your father."

Whereupon Madge assumed her best air and, sauntering after the daughter to whose father Mr. Sainsbury had been devoted, begged to be allowed to execute some little commission for her in town.

"I was intending to walk there myself," Miss Warden returned, with a kind smile. "Shall we go together?"

So Madge and Cyril were introduced to the Sainsbury set. And having found footing there, they again turned chilling shoulders on Miss Warden.

"Pop seems perfectly mooney about her," Madge confided to Cyril, angrily. "If you don't look out, you'll be having a stepmother everybody will mistake for a housekeeper. There was something between them years ago.

She showed me an old ball programme with 'Henry Ambrose' to a half-dozen dances. Fancy father dancing! And she actually blushed and almost cried. 'Your father was very handsome in those days,' she said; and she called me 'dear,' just as if everything had been settled."

"Pop isn't at all a bad looking chap, even now," Cyril admitted, candidly. "But we're not going to stand any nonsense of that sort, and the old lady needn't think it."

III

MADGE was in excellent spirits. Mr. Sainsbury's eldest son had proved most attentive. Miss Warden had introduced him, and he had forthwith become her devoted admirer. Hence her good temper. But she was a very businesslike and up-to-date young woman, and she kept the eye that was not smiling on young Sainsbury very well open on her father and Miss Warden. As Cyril had said, she did not intend to stand any nonsense of that sort.

"Such a pity that poor boy and girl of Henry's have been so badly brought up!" Miss Warden reflected, with a species of fond compassion; for, after all, she found it hard to excuse faults of heart as well as of breeding. Still, were they not Henry's children? And Henry, despite his defection, had remained her hero all these years. Was it not for him the tears had washed the blue from her eyes?—the blue he had once called "forget-me-not"—and had forgotten!

"If anything were to happen," she continued, with a little red spot in each cheek—"if anything were to happen, one might soon influence them to better things. Poor children, they have been sadly neglected! Poor Henry, too! Such a lonely, unhappy man as he is! His son and daughter mean nothing to him."

Mr. Ambrose, at this epoch, certainly did not appear to be an object of compassion. However, many a portly, middle-aged gentleman, despite

his comfortable aspect, is in reality very deserving of sympathy, if sympathy is to be meted out according to a man's lack of everything that makes for happiness.

But just now Mr. Ambrose wore an air of manifest content. He had found what marriage with the blue tulle frock had failed to give him—companionship. A man whose mind had been always engaged, in the first place of necessity, and in the second and third places by inclination and habit, with considerations of ways and means and stocks and shares and other similar unsatisfying solitudes, Ambrose boasted but scant social abilities. He got on well enough with men, but with women, owing to a lack of small talk, he felt himself to be always at a disadvantage. Yet deep down in the heart that had sighed at the end of his honeymoon, and had yearned over chubby baby Madge, there was a vein of sentiment that kept him diffident and longing in remote and dusky window-corners and eternally below the dais in feminine drawing-rooms, watching in fascinated loneliness the movement and color of scenes that are ever strange to the eyes of a particular order of man.

Miss Warden seemed to him to personify all the coveted amenities—culture, refinement, cheerfulness and charm—and he seemed to partake of them in her presence. For a space of two out of his projected four weeks' holiday he was a changed man, and for the first time since his youth contented and smooth-tempered.

JV

Now the sharp eyes of Madge were not slow to perceive that pop's lids drooped with a sudden bashfulness, and that a very self-conscious smile was wont to show about his mouth whenever Miss Warden approached. Wherefore she waxed very indignant and felt inclined to slap somebody, preferably Miss Warden.

Cyril was more tolerant than his

sister. He sat up late in the smoking-room, and took more whiskey and strong cigars than were good for him, with the result that he developed a state of mind which he regarded as philosophic, but which, in truth, was more nearly lethargic.

"Oh, you're forever crying 'Wolf!'" he protested. "For the last year you've suspected every woman who looked at pop of plotting to marry him."

"But this time," Madge responded, "it is serious. For the first time on record it is pop who is interested."

"He does seem fond of her," admitted Cyril. "Beastly nuisance," he added, in a voice of injury, "having to look after one's parent!"

Whereupon Madge and he plotted a plot. It was apparently a most diverting one, for they parted presently with smiles, Cyril slapping his leg with an energy quite foreign to him.

"It will be as good as a play," he cried. "But I say, how the deuce am I to slip out of it afterward? An engagement's an engagement, you know."

Madge's laughter took a contemptuous note.

"There won't be much difficulty about that," she retorted. "A man may not marry his grandmother."

"Oh, well, honor's honor," Cyril demurred, gnawing a mustache of tardy growth. "Men are different from women."

"There are a hundred ways of managing it," Madge said, impatiently. "Leave it to me if you can't do it."

"But if she says 'No?' If she prefers father?"

"A bird in the hand," asserted Madge.

"Now, how wrong one is to judge too hastily," Miss Warden said, compunctiously, a few days later. "When one knows him, that boy of Henry's is quite a nice and lovable young fellow. It is chiefly in manner that he errs. His mother was not cultivated. But he seems to have a good heart, and that is the main thing."

Still, a few days later, she wrung distressed hands over the good-hearted boy, who knelt dramatically at her feet.

"My dear young man," she deprecated, tears flowing over her cheeks, "what a deplorable mistake to have made! I am old enough to be your mother. My dear, I am infinitely distressed. For pity's sake, get up and let me talk sense to you!"

"I will remain on my knees till you accept me!" Cyril protested, as he had once heard a man in a play protest. His face was hidden in his palms. She laid a gentle hand upon his head.

"Get up, my dear," she said, firmly; and Cyril slowly rose.

"Now sit down, and listen to some reason," she continued; and Cyril sat, like a penitent child, on the chair she indicated.

There were dignity and kind authority in her mild face. Perhaps he had a better heart than he believed; at all events, he could not meet the faded, tear-moist eyes. He sat with his lids drooped.

"I shall be proud to be your friend, dear," she insisted, gently laying a white hand over his. "I knew your father when he was as young as you. If it were not that you misapprehended a boy's regard for a woman old enough to be his mother—and believe me, I am honored by your affection—you would make me ridiculous. And I am sure you would never wish to do that. Go back to your golf and in a few days you will see things differently. And if you should ever need a friend—"

She confided the remainder to her handkerchief.

On an impulse that astounded him, Cyril bent his head, and, for the first time in his life, kissed a woman's hand. He strode from the room with a wholesome sense that he should like the opportunity of kicking any man who could be so much of a cur as he had made of himself.

Madge awaited him outside.

"Well," she demanded, unpleasant laughter in her eyes, "how solemn you look!"

"See here," he blurted, savagely, "do your own dirty work in future. I'm not going to do any more of it."

She pointed a finger of scorn at him.

"You've been rejected!"

"I've made a beast of myself," he said. "You and I are not fit to clean her boots."

He strode away.

"One might suppose he had wished her to accept him," she said, angrily.

But she had lost her ally. Thereafter she was forced to play a lone hand. For Cyril submitted diffidently to his father some hours later. Curiously enough, his father had assumed a species of dignity in his eyes, seeing that Miss Warden cared for him.

"I say, pop, we must mind and keep up Miss Warden when we leave here. She's a—ripping, charming lady."

Mr. Ambrose showed symptoms of embarrassed pleasure.

"She is—extremely pleasant," he returned. "I should be very glad to—to keep her up."

Now, as has been stated, Ambrose, one of the boldest and most determined operators on the Stock Exchange, was a timid man where women were concerned. Things financial he comprehended perfectly; things feminine not at all. He intended fully to propose to "Anne"—he had reached the stage where he designated her "Anne," as of old, in his deliberations. He hoped—indeed, he was fairly confident—that she would accept him. But he was waiting for an opportunity. In things financial he would have known that opportunities are things to be made, not waited for. And Madge gave him no opportunities.

"If I can tide him over next week—we leave on Monday," Madge reflected, some ten days before the end of the month,—“we shall probably never see her again. I'll wire this morning for Cis Robinson. She will take the wind out of the lady's sails. She may flirt with Willie Sainsbury, but I must chance that. I've held

my own with her before this, and, luckily, she's engaged."

So she wired to Cissie Robinson.

"I think you might have had the civility to ask permission," Ambrose said, annoyed, when she went to him with Cissie's telegram of acceptance in her hand. "She is such a very rapid person. You must know I never liked her."

Madge laughed.

"I thought you'd say 'no,' pop, if I asked you, so I forgot to ask."

As Madge had anticipated, Cis took the wind out of Anne Warden's sails—out of most women's sails, indeed. Yet, strange to relate, she herself had long failed to find port.

She was dark and handsome, a clever talker, an accomplished pianist and of a figure men described as "stunning." She was not a young woman, but she understood perfectly the art of dressing; she was, in short, one of those brilliant and attractive persons concerning whom the world stands ever in amazement because they fail to marry.

"And why do you suppose Miss Warden wishes to marry your father?" Cis demanded.

Madge laughed.

"Father is a rich man," she asserted.

Cis shrugged her expressive shoulders.

"Not rich, as rich goes nowadays, dear," she said, demurely. "Newton Towers is a nice place, but—well, to be candid, your father has no New York house."

"That is a mere question of weeks," Madge boasted; "I've tormented him about it till he has promised to look at a house in Fifth Avenue. I can tell you, father is a great deal better off than people know."

"Fifth Avenue?" repeated Cis, reflectively.

"You should see the diamond necklet father's having made for my next birthday," Madge persisted. "The very finest water, and beautifully set."

Miss Robinson's handsome fingers were raised to her throat, playing

there with a modest garnet-and-pearl circlet.

"And what is your objection to Miss Warden as a stepmother?" she demanded; "she seems rather nice."

"My objection is to a stepmother at all," cried Madge.

"Oh, of course!" assented Cissie.

"Only you might have a worse, you know."

"And I might have none at all!"

Miss Robinson hummed a few bars from a comic opera with an air of preoccupation.

"And now tell me about yourself," demanded Madge. "How goes the last engagement? Is he good-looking and rich? I do hope you will be luckier than last time."

"Oh, the last engagement is off," said Cissie, reddening. "Cupid isn't kind to me. You will find I shall die an old maid, after all."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Madge. But she experienced a very distinct sense of uneasiness, though whence it came or why she would have found it difficult to say.

"Does your father admire—well, the milk-and-water, gentle, amiable sort of creatures?" Cissie inquired, abruptly.

"Oh, I don't know," retorted Madge, somewhat irritably. "Yes, I suppose he does, seeing that he likes Miss Warden."

V

"WHAT an absolute old lady Miss Warden looks beside Cis, pop," Madge submitted, with an air of guilelessness.

"Miss Warden is but little over forty," he responded, with an air of offense; "ten years younger than your father."

"Oh, but men are different," Madge insisted, glibly. "Did you say that Miss Warden had ever been pretty? It seems impossible."

"She is a very sweet-looking, cultivated woman. And she was extremely handsome as a girl."

"Ah, that Dorcas type of woman

never wears well. Now, Cis, for example, will be handsome when she is sixty."

There was a long silence, during which Ambrose's eyes made odious comparisons. Miss Warden and Miss Robinson walked together up and down the hotel lawns which served on Sundays for a church parade. Miss Robinson wore a very smart, rose-pink gown, that fitted and displayed her fine figure to perfection.

Miss Warden wore black and an air of dejection.

Mr. Ambrose sighed heavily, fidgeted, hummed an air out of tune, and drummed with his feet on the floor of the veranda. Then he said, rather helplessly:

"Your friend is certainly very handsome. And I think her much improved. She has grown quite—gentle and retiring."

Madge stared. Was her father going mad? She scoffed beneath her breath. He should see her with Will Sainsbury! She could scarce sit still for smarting resentment at the thought of those two.

Will had gone over to the enemy as a lamb to the slaughter. Moreover, Cis on all occasions won hands down at golf, so that by this time Madge was scarcely on speaking terms with her handsome and retiring friend.

It was the last time Cis would be invited to the house of Ambrose, Madge reflected, angrily. She had spent a perfectly beastly time since Cis's arrival.

However, she had gained her object. Miss Warden was checkmated; she was easily depressed, and Henry's wide-eyed, fascinated admiration of the invader spoiled the cheerful serenity that was her charm. Madge concealed her friend's shortcomings and continued to employ her with effect as a foil. "Only three days," she reflected, "and I shall take care that we have seen the very last of Miss Warden and Cis Robinson."

Under his firm and portly exterior, Ambrose was a weak man, as his defection in the matter of the blue tulle gown showed. Under her slight and diffident appearance, Miss Warden was a strong woman. She did not wait for a second defeat; blue tulle or rose-pink, it was all the same. Fate and Henry's indecision were against her. While Ambrose vacillated she packed her trunks, paid her bill and wrote a note.

She wrote the note twice over, for the reason that one of a good many tears coursed down her face when she was off guard and plashed upon the lines.

She made graceful farewells. She thanked the Ambroses for the pleasure their society had proved to her. She gave no address. She was going abroad for several months. She whispered no syllable of further meeting.

Ambrose spent two sullen days apart. Madge dared not approach him. Her head had been snapped off for a word. Though little skilled in feminine methods, Ambrose was not without perceptions. He realized that the change in the situation was of Madge's making. All the old cynicism and discontent returned with Anne's departure. Anne had made a new man of him.

On the third morning he came out of his seclusion. He wore his best clothes and a new neckcloth. There was malice in the looks he turned on Madge at breakfast.

After luncheon he took her aside.

"I am going to marry Miss Robinson," he said, regarding her with hard eyes. "It will add to my expenses. You will have to learn to do with a third the allowance you have been used to. Indeed, I think you had better look out for some kind of employment. A handsome young stepmother is not likely to make you an agreeable home."

He laughed harshly and turned on his heel.



ON MABEL'S WISH FOR ARCADY

(AT THE BALL)

By Samuel Minturn Peck

YOU'D like to be a shepherdess
Beside a Summer brook?
The sweetest rhyme could ne'er express
How charming you would look.
In kirtle blue and ribbons fair,
'Mid your devoted sheep,
I'm sure that you would never share
The fate of poor Bo Peep.

Ah, if you were a shepherdess
We'd meet at dawn of day!
This blissful thought, I must confess,
Quite takes my breath away.
We'd gaily trip across the grass,
Unmindful of the dew;
In faithful love I'd far surpass
The lamb that Mary knew.

Were you a little shepherdess,
We'd skip and tra-la-la
Until, for very joyousness,
The woolies echoed, "Ba-a!"
And then some sweet, secluded spot
We'd seek in merry mood,
And, by the selfish world forgot,
We'd feast on berry food.

Were you a little shepherdess—
What happy fancies teem!
With difficulty I repress
My rapture at the dream.
With Mrs. Grundy out of sight,
And nature all in tune,
We'd fold our lambkins up at night
And woo beneath the moon.

Oh, if you were a shepherdess—
But have you weighed the price?
I shudder at your wild distress,
Deprived of chocolate ice.
And how you'd miss your curling tongs!
Without a looking-glass,
In spite of all my pretty songs
You'd be a wretched lass.

THE SMART SET

Ah! if you were a shepherdess—
 Imagination climbs!
 On such a theme I might digress,
 And weave a thousand rhymes.
 But you will never sport a crook
 To witch my raptured sight—
 Here comes your aunt with savage look—
 The ball is done—good-night!



COULD AFFORD TO WAIT

FRED—So she said you would have to wait for an answer?
 NED—Yes; but that wasn't so bad. She was in my lap, you know.



FEMININE RECKLESSNESS

“‘BECAUSE I love you,’” sang the girl;
 The man two flights above
 Was saddened by the thought of what
 Some women do for love.



TIME TOO LIMITED

SHE—Darling, I wish I could tell you how much I love you!
 HE—Well, can't you, dearest?
 “No. I come of a short-lived family.”



THE SUNBURST

UPON her breast a diamond sunburst lies,
 And sparkles with a myriad prismic eyes.
 Draped in rare velvet from old Lyons' looms,
 She walks in splendor through the bright-lit rooms.

Not one amidst the throng so fair as she,
 Wrapped all about with pride and chastity.
 Like a young queen she holds her stately head,
 Yet underneath there lies a heart that's dead.

ALLEN HARTE.

DAPHNE OF THE IMPOSSIBLES

By Guy Somerville

IN the beginning there was Flynn, and he amassed much wealth in Standard Oil, and other much in oil that could not, by any fair construction, be deemed standard; and he journeyed to Paris and built him a house on the Avenue d'Jéna, and died, leaving a daughter and, it was whispered, three beautiful widows, whereof but one was known to fame or sat in high places, and this was the mother of the daughter; which last had been given to Flynn in his old, old age, wherefore he called her name Daphne, as surely he would never have done had this thing happened in his prime. And Daphne waxed beautiful and round, and went to school at the Sisters', which is upon the Boulevard des Invalides, numéro 31, and raised quantities of fuzzy, yellow hair; and, in the course of time, she came out—on which occasion the wife of the American Ambassador held her head and acted as sponsor. She is dead now, the Ambassador's lady, and has been cremated; but she did nobly that day, and will live in my memory always. Peace be!

The house on the Avenue d'Jéna was a large, sad house, and visibly deprecated the revelry which, day and night, Daphne did compass within. And there were present some men of extremest fashion—*monocliers* and such as wear chrysanthemums at high noon and who, for the sinful pride of the flesh, walk not in their own embassies—chief of whom was Charlie Ericsson, my friend. But for the most part the guests of Daphne were of the wealthy bourgeois class from which Daphne herself had sprung—the class to whom the Rue de la Paix

is Paris, and who are sometimes heard to remark that there is a "stuffy" atmosphere about the social circles of the Faubourg St.-Germain.

Whereof the first and greatest was Hunter—Roy Hunter—Hunter of the flaming cheeks and the embroidered waistcoats and of the mustaches done to a turn—lord of Newark, baron of all the Jerseys, heir of billions and billions of bile-engendering beers—who loved Daphne, as did Ericsson and most other persons, so that no man knew what the issue was like to be, and all men wondered.

Came to me Charlie Ericsson, as I lounged, meditative, in my den in the Continental, which I love because it is old and moth-eaten and historic, and because I have visions of the stately Marie when I look out of its front windows over the Tuileries. I do not mean Marie Antoinette; she is dead. It is another Marie, who promenades herself in the Tuileries gardens in the mornings and stares at the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde, which she thinks marks the former site of the guillotine. She is evidently not a Parisian girl. She is doubtless from the South, and, I suspect, was nourished on red burgundy. Which explains why her cheeks— But I must get back to Charlie.

He came to me and said:

"Landsdowne, I have almost persuaded myself to marry Daphne."

I said:

"Better begin by persuading Marie—I mean Daphne."

He sniffed suspiciously, for he knows much, and has talents.

"Who in the devil is Mar—? No, never mind. I refuse to be a party

to anything of the kind. I never did such a thing, and I don't purpose to begin now. But about Daphne, it is all right. I think she will, if I say so."

I carefully cut and placed in rest a Flor de Cabaña y Carbajal.

"Why," I observed, "do you think she will—if you say so?"

Charlie looked at me patronizingly across the table.

"Maybe you think it's Hunter!" he said, demurely.

"I think," said I, cautiously, "that she likes Hunter. But I don't believe she has ever let him kiss her, for instance."

"You will understand," said Charlie, grandly, "that that is a matter wholly between me and Daphne."

"If it happened often," I murmured, "it might be decidedly between you and Daphne."

"She likes me better," said Charlie.

"How do you know?"

He fixed me with his gaze, very impressive.

"Have you ever heard," he said, in a diplomatic whisper, "of ex-Queen Arabella of Spain? Arabella the Bourbon!"

"Sh!" I said. "She lives just underneath."

He started.

"I forgot," he said. "She does, doesn't she? I was through her suite once when she was away at the baths. It's a bully suite, all *tapisserie Beau*—what d'ye call it—and real tubs and things, just like at home. Do you know, Landsdowne, that she is the smartest thing in Paris?"

I nodded vaguely. I was thinking, for the moment, of Marie.

"There was Mrs. Tyler Johnson," said Charlie, reflecting. "She tried to know Arabella, and couldn't. You remember Mrs. Johnson? She wanted to buy the Trocadéro and live in it. *Everybody* went to the Johnsons', and her things were extraordinary when she gave them. Then there was Mrs. Potter Parks, who, you remember, was the acknowledged leader of the colony for two years. She tried desperately hard, but the Bour-

bon would have none of her. She doesn't speak to our Ambassador when he passes by, and usually doesn't remember a fellow's name unless he is kings or better."

"Quite so," I said, yawning. "But what in the devil—?"

"Have I made it good and strong?" said Charlie, complacently. "Because she is giving something small and select to-night, and I'm going."

I smoked on, unperturbed.

"Who's your friend?" I said, at last.

Here Charlie triumphed.

"Daphne," said Charlie.

I cast my cigar far out into the Tuileries gardens.

"What do you think she'd like?" I said. "A silver salad bowl?"

He smiled.

"It's this way, you see," he explained. "When Daff was young and—er—well, immature, I was very kind to her, very kind, y'know. I—er—sort of set her up in society, y'know. It was through me that she met the Stilesees, and the Golladays, and the Geers, and the Kittrells. And now, in some unaccountable way, she has gone and met the old Bourbon—"

"Sh!" I said.

"And, of course, it is love at first sight on the part of the Bourbon. And she's been asked to the soirée to-night, which the *Figaro* says the President of the Republic would give his Golden Fleece to be asked to; and she has the privilege of bringing a man—one man. That's me."

"One of 57 varieties," I added, dreamily.

"Eh?" he said.

"I accept the amendment," I replied. "A1 of 57 varieties. Don't swell up with pride, Charlie—and be careful of varicose veins. And go home and change. I am due at Armenonville in a quarter of an hour, which I can't be there, but I must do the best I can."

He left. He is a good fellow, is Charlie—but just a trifle wearing. And it is jolly to surprise him; he does not understand being surprised. So I had not mentioned to him that

my uncle, the Duke of Rochester, had once been very near to Arabella the Bourbon—more than near enough to help her over the puddles. This is a Russian proverb that means much. In fact, they say that my uncle, the Duke of Rochester— But no; we will drop my uncle, the Duke. Only, the Bourbon, as Charlie calls her, religiously sent me cards to her festivals, to which I went, wholly irreligious and care free, as I was going to this one.

Now, this is the true and lawful story of the début of Charlie, the youthful swain, in the house of Arabella, the great Queen. Which things I, Landsdowne, saw, from my place in the alcove, where Mme. Anne de Montmorenci-Contencin vied with the Baroness Niederhausen for my favor, whispering honeyed nothings and heaping me with *confetti*. For I was the only man in the room under forty, and my reputation was bad.

In the exact centre of the salon of white-and-gold stood the quondam Queen of Spain in translucent white satins, and beside her the guest of the evening, the Duchesse d'Yapostroféaux. I do not know what the Duchesse d'Yapostroféaux wore. She is a very superior sort of person, and rises above her clothes—though there is nothing uncommon about this in Paris, especially in the evening.

Around and about the salon and the red salon next adjoining—the one with the picturesque outlook on the *confiserie-pâtisseries* of the Rue Rouget de Lisle—stood Bourbons: Bourbons of every age and size and color, with names that went back to the Flood, and backs stiff in proportion; Bourbons who had temporarily sojourned abroad—every family of them—during the Empire. And the Baroness Niederhausen, who is not one of these, whispered, mischievously:

"*Fichtre!* It is but China, *enfin*, for the Chinese."

"It isn't," said I, sorrowfully. "It is boxes for the Boxers. And they shut the lids so tight that no air ever gets in."

"There is nothing in that," said the Baroness Niederhausen. "Fancy these people being aired!"

At this moment I caught the eye of Charles Ericsson, Esq., in the doorway, with Daphne, irresistible and fluffy, almost upon his arm, and her chaperon, Madame la Comtesse de Quelque Chose. For certain reasons I do not care to be more particular. Nobody caught the names as they were announced.

The Queen said (I heard her): "How do you do, Madame the Countess —? How do you do, Daphne, my little child? I am ravished to see you, Meestaire Hunter."

I saw Daphne suddenly grow very red. It came to me all at once. Beside me the Baroness Niederhausen was choking to death, silently. I did not dare look at Charlie.

The Queen turned to her guest of the evening.

"Henriette," she said, "you have heard me speak of my little Daphne—my little American wildflower—who says such piquant slang. This is Daphne."

Daphne curtsied to the guest of the evening.

"And this," pursued Her Majesty, "is her best friend—Meestaire Hunter."

The Duchesse d'Yapostroféaux graciously inclined her head.

"If Molière were alive and could see!" whispered the Baroness Niederhausen.

Slowly and gracefully Charlie's gorge rose. Then he bowed like a prince of the Holy Roman Empire.

"Mesdames," he said, "I am most honored. Ericsson, not Hunter."

There was an instant's pause.

Then Her Majesty laughed gaily. "What an odd little meestake it is that I make," said she. "It is dark where you stand; the shadow of the candelabra. For a moment I meestook you for Meestaire Hunter. You know, Daphne, you said you were going to bring him also."

The Baroness Niederhausen clapped her hands.

Daphne blurted out: "Yes, I want-

ed him to come—also. But he was dining out at the Élys—he was dining out. So Mr. Ericsson and the Countess and I had to come alone.”

“We had to come alone,” interjected the Countess, rising to the occasion.

“I thought it was Mr. Ericsson,” said the Duchesse d’Yapostroféaux. “My husband has pointed you out to me at the—at the Bergère.”

“They may need air,” said the Baroness Niederhausen, to me, “but—God in heaven!—they are gentle.”

“They are born,” said I, with conviction. “It is beautiful. Her husband doesn’t know Ericsson from a *pâté de Strasbourg*.”

“The Queen could not do wrong,” said the Baroness.

“If she did, no one would ever know,” I said, with feeling. And I thought tenderly on my uncle, the Duke.

I jumped into the nearest *fiacre* with a melancholy sense of the futility of human effort, and bowled bouncingly down the silent Rue de Rivoli and into the Rue Royale. It was an old acquaintance, the *cocher*, and without a word from me he stopped in front of Maxim’s.

Charlie Ericsson sat at a table by the window, eating lobsters with an air of grave ennui. There were a good many lobsters. I do not, of course, refer to Charlie.

I sat beside him, and they brought me a *bisque d’écrevisses* such as Maxim wots well to brew, and nobody else in this whole, wide world besides. And no king, nor captain, nor pope could have had that *bisque* of me.

“I don’t know whether you noticed,” said Charlie, nervously, “that Daphne made me a bit ridiculous before the Bourbon.”

I bit meditatively into a stuffed *écrevisse*, the which swam merrily in my *bisque*.

“A bit ridiculous—perhaps,” I agreed.

“Before the Bourbon,” insisted Charlie.

“Before the Bourbon—exactly,” said I.

“It wasn’t a nice thing for her to do,” he said, tristfully. “And—I didn’t expect it—from Daphne. You mayn’t happen to know it, Landsdowne, but I was the making of the girl.”

“Yes,” I said, nervously. I feared that Charlie would go back to the beginning of things. “Yes—you used to put on her skates when she skated in the Bois. Then you taught her that the Bois would hardly do, and after that she skated in the Palais de Glace, on the Avenue des Champs Élysées, at five francs an afternoon. That was because Mrs. De la Mar skated there. You made her meet Mrs. De la Mar, and go there, and all that. It was through you that she met the Stileses, and the Golladays, and the Kittrells, and the Geers. Decidedly, you are the making of the girl, I know.”

“I remember,” said Charlie, “when I first met her—at Mrs. Clarke’s. They were living then out Passy way, on the Avenue Victor Hugo—dear old Clarke! Daphne was a barbarian in, or just out of, pinafores, and Mrs. Clarke died three weeks later of heart disease, contracted that night at dinner trying to anticipate what impossible thing the girl would say next.”

“Go on,” I said, feebly.

“I wanted to see if she had any sense of humor. So I told how it had just been discovered that Rudyard Kipling was a girl, and that his real name was Maud.”

“That, of course, was a perfect test,” I murmured, thoughtfully. “Did she laugh?”

He sat back wearily, toying with the forks and things. “No,” he said, “she believed the story. Will you have a *pousse-café*? A *demi-tasse*, at any rate? Two *demi-tasses* and one *pousse-café*, with plenty of kummel. And she knew that I wanted to go to this thing at the Bourbon’s.”

“Well,” I said, “she took you.”

“Yes,” said he, “she took me—when Hunter couldn’t go. Nice chap, Hunter. Manners of a fox

terrier, with a college education. Damme! he shows his teeth when displeased. And I really thought she loved me—a little bit."

"I fancy," I put in, thoughtfully, "that that is just the way she did love——"

"You needn't rub it in, Lands-

downe," said he. "It wasn't a nice thing, you know."

"There are plenty of other girls," said I.

Charlie put his lobster from him with a haughty gesture. "Oh, it isn't that I care a Continental Dame!" he said.



"LOVE IS BLIND"

SILLY ladies, who essay
To invent a cunning way
By which cheeks shall freshly glow,
Lips appear a crimson bow,
Eyebrows arch and lashes droop—
Think you Love is then your dupe,
And will take your royal flush
For the work of Nature's brush?
Doubtless you your warrant find
In the statement: 'Love is blind!'—
Or (by specs his sight increased)
Hope he's *color-blind*, at least.

EDWIN L. SABIN.



EASY ENOUGH

"THE easiest way to get into society is to marry for money."
"But suppose a fellow is in and wants to get out?"
"Then marry for love."



RECIPROCITY

"I GIVE you all my love," she said,
"And surely yours must come
To take its place, for nature, dear,
Abhors a vacuum."

WILLIAM J. LAMPTON.

TO A HOTHOUSE VIOLET

SWEET flower, the theme of ardent verse
 By noble poets passed away,
 You miss their homage in the terse
 And careless rhymes we scrawl to-day.
 Perhaps we cannot find in you
 The charms our elders used to see—
 The "sweetly simple gown of blue,"
 The air of "shrinking modesty."

Oh, doubled-frilled and flounced delight,
 You're but the grandchild of that race
 The mossy stones concealed from sight;
 You don't pretend to hide *your* face,
 But, perky as a poppy-head,
 Tied up with satin ribbons fine,
 When country flowers are snug in bed
 You hie away to dance or dine.

Think how your grandmamma would stare
 To see your dissipated ways,
 To see you lean with languid air
 On silken gowns where diamonds blaze!
 And oh, deceiver, think how great
 Your February prices be!
 Then tell me if their fiendish rate
 Doth quite consist with modesty.

Yet when within this florist's box
 You and your pretty sisters lie
 In dampened paper orthodox
 Until you meet my lady's eye—
 When in your purple robes you reign,
 Throned on her breast, that royal place,
 I'll sing your charms if you will gain
 This charm for me—my lady's grace!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.



HER GREATEST DISADVANTAGE

HE—What do you consider the greatest wrong to woman?
 SHE—Her great majority in numbers.

THE BLAMELESS VILLAIN

By Stewart Edward White

THERE was once a young girl who was a sentimentalist, and read the English magazines.

"Oh, why has the age of chivalry departed from us?" she would wail to one of her very dearest friends. "Our young men are too busy to undertake Quests for us. Life is too strenuous. It is so different abroad!"

"It is," breathed the dearest friend.

"No one ever undertakes to carry important diplomatic messages and is nearly asphyxiated on the train. No one ever comes here and is a mysterious Indian prince. No one ever steals your diamonds and takes them to a dark house on a lonely road where your lover can rescue them. Life here is so prosaic!"

"And you have such lovely diamonds!" sighed the friend.

The dearest friends often varied in their opinions on other matters, but they were unanimous on the subject of the jewels.

In time the sentimental young girl evolved a plot constructed on the lines of the best authorities as set forth by the *Buckingham*, the *Piccadilly*, the *Fleet Street*, the *Imperial* and other periodicals. The stage properties she found ready to her hand. Her father, the earl, must take the diamonds from the bank to her house, and place them on a table while he consults the family lawyer in the adjoining library. During his absence the box must be stolen by a villain, who must escape into a garden. In the garden he must leave footprints. The hero must be opportunely passing, engaged in smoking a cigar before retiring. He must follow the villain to the nearest deserted house, where will await the accom-

plish. After a few words the thieves will separate. Enter the hero. He is to produce a revolver or club, and is to give the accomplice, who denies all knowledge of the gems, fifteen seconds to disgorge. At the fourteen-and-a-half-second point the accomplice disgorges. Next morning the hero calls on the heroine before breakfast. "This early visit must surely mean something important," exclaims the heroine, in surprise; "you are up early!" "I have not slept," replies the hero; "I have spent the night in your service, as I would spend my life." He produces the diamonds.

That was the plot the sentimental young girl made out of the English magazines. Her father was not an earl, but he looked like one; nor were the diamonds in a bank, but that was a detail. The evening newspaper would do for him to consult, and he would probably do the consulting in the city, for the rumor of a dinner party always drove him to inaccessible clubs; but what difference did that make? He could send the diamonds by registered post. The colored butler would do for the villain, because he always did what he was told; and the buttons would make an admirable accomplice, because he, too, read the English magazines—after Miss Goodwood had finished with them. The *mise-en-scène* was quite perfect, for the Goodwoods were at the time in their country home on the outskirts of a village; and from the front gate a lonely road led past a kind friend's empty cottage, the key of which was easily procurable from the caretaker. As for the hero, he did not matter so much. Anyone would do.

Miss Goodwood enumerated his duties to the buttons. She explained it all as a joke, calling to his mind the stories in the English magazines. Somewhere underneath the buttons a boy lay hidden.

"My eye!" said the boy. "Yes, Miss Goodwood," said the buttons.

He understood and appreciated. For three days, by way of rehearsal, he made mysterious speeches in dark corners, until the other servants concluded him crazy.

So far, so good. The sentimental young girl next wrote five oblong notes to two of the dearest friends and to three young men, inviting them to dinner on a certain date. This meant that they would also stay the night. By the same mail went a request to her father (the earl) that he send out her diamonds for use at a dinner party the twenty-fifth of the month. The company would be chaperoned by Miss Tibbs, a maiden aunt with an hysterical nature and a kittenish disposition.

Of the three young men, Miss Goodwood, after deliberation, chose a practical business man. There seemed more chance of testing the inherence of American chivalry in his person. Much depended, after all, on how the hero rose to the occasion. The individual who was elected had the reputation of being keen and courageous in commercial crises. It would be interesting to see how well these qualities would serve him in the mediæval adventure.

As to person, he was a thick-set, matter-of-fact individual whose opinions of things in general were well summed up in his frequent remark: "Business is not run on sentiment." Anyone more unlike the English magazine hero it would be difficult to imagine. So much the better test.

The dinner, as a dinner, was not a success. Miss Goodwood was too *distracted* to attend properly to her duties as a hostess. The scheme occupied all her thoughts. And, worst of all, she had to appear without the celebrated diamonds, for the reason that up to the soup they had not put

in an appearance. Then, to her relief, John—butler and villain—brought the carefully sealed package to her on a tray.

"See!" she cried, gaily, "here are all the jewels with which I was going to dazzle you this evening. Now you will have to take them on faith!"

The inanest young man murmured the appropriate reply about dazzling.

"Put them on the library table until after dinner," she added, to the butler.

"Do you think they will be quite safe there?" inquired Bincker, the hero.

Miss Goodwood could have clapped her hands over this fortunate remark. It started the hero's thoughts on the right track.

At the other end of the table Miss Tibbs contributed to the failure of the dinner. From soup to salad she talked books; from salad to cheese she dissertated in a sprightly manner of Miss Goodwood when a baby; on the appearance of the cheese she cheerfully asked the inanest young man what flower would come up if she were to plant an animal and an article of lady's clothing. "Fox-glove!" she shrieked at the bewildered youth. "Now, you ask one, Mr. Fitzhugh, and see if I can guess it." Coffee brought with it the proposition of a game requiring pencils and paper, than which there are no lower depths.

In ordinary circumstances Miss Goodwood would have seen and checked this slaughter of the amenities, but now she was quite absorbed in the details of her scheme. The company fell with gasps of delight into the comparatively familiar coils of "Up, Jenkins." Miss Goodwood rose and called John, the butler and villain, to her.

"John," said she, impressively, taking the square package in her hand, "I am going to ask you to do something very strange, and without telling you what it is all about. Do you think you can do it?"

"Yais, miss," replied John, promptly.

"I want you to eat your dinner as fast as you can, and then wait in the dark corner of the hall with this package until I come to you. If anyone happens to pass through the hall, you must slip behind the curtain into the little closet. No one must see you. Understand?"

John rolled his eyes. "Yais, miss," said he, still without hesitation.

"Then, when I tell you, you are to climb out of the dining-room window, cross the garden, go down the road to Mr. Pierce's cottage, where you will find James sitting in the kitchen. You will give him the package, which you must take great care of, for it contains my diamonds, and come back to me at once, without saying one word to James—not one word. Now, all this is very important; are you sure you understand?"

"Yais, miss."

"Repeat what I have just told you."

John, butler and villain, did so. His conclusion of "Foh de Lohd!" had in it a pathetic but hopeless curiosity. John read nothing, but he had his traditions. They were of the "faithful unto death" order.

"And let me know at once when you have finished your dinner."

Fifteen minutes later John skimmed cautiously over the stormy waters of "Up, Jenkins" to inform his mistress that all was ready. Two minutes after that Miss Goodwood returned wildly to her guests.

"My diamonds!" she gasped; "they're gone!"

From that moment events slid along the grooves worn for them by the traditions of the English magazines. Auntie Tibbs had hysterics; everybody crowded excitedly about; suggestions and searches were made; the servants were called and interrogated; the absence of John, butler and villain, was noted; the inanest young man was despatched for the village police; the hero offered to take a look about the grounds; the other young men offered to accompany him; latter proposition vetoed by the girls, who refused to be left alone;

John, butler and villain, received his signal and escaped through the window. It was glorious.

Bincker, the hero, began at the front door and proceeded, methodically, around the end of the house. As he turned the corner he perceived a figure slipping through the front gate. "Aha!" said Bincker, softly, starting to follow. "Oho!" said he, when he recognized the butler and made out the white package that the latter carried carefully in his hand.

Now, Bincker never read the English magazines, but he was an assiduous student of the daily press.

"Either he is going to hide his booty somewhere, or he has an accomplice," said Bincker to himself. "If the latter, I may as well know who it is."

So he set himself the task of following John. He did it in the most approved style, by slinking along the shadows of the trees and walls about thirty yards behind the object of his pursuit.

Near the new United Westphalian Church John encountered Pie Face, the fat and zealous village policeman. His name was not really Pie Face; but he was the only policeman. Of course, he knew John well, and being lonely and gregarious, he halted the butler for a chat.

"In a hurry, John?" he inquired, ponderously.

"Good evenin', offisah," replied John, with great pomposity. "Ah am gaged in a errand of impohtance."

"Jehoshaphat! Come off!" advised Pie Face; "where did you git them words?"

John reflected that the protection of the law is always a good thing; besides which, he had to back his bluff.

"Ah am transpohting heah," said he, haughtily, "Miss Goodwood's di'monds, an' Ah cannot lingah!" After which he strutted on his interrupted way.

"Jehoshaphat!" ejaculated Pie Face, looking after him. At that moment Bincker, the hero, slunk past in the shadow of the trees. The sight made Pie Face's blubber quiver.

Pie Face did not read the English magazines, either; but he solaced a dull and profitless employment with the writings of Old Sleuth, and he knew just what to do. "Drawing his trusty six-shooter," he breathed, "the brave officer put himself in instant pursuit of the lurking villain;" saying which he suited the action to the word, following, a little more carefully, about fifty yards behind Bincker, the hero.

John, butler and villain, naturally arrived first at the Pierce cottage, and proceeding at once to the kitchen, he there discovered James, the accomplice, seated by the table. Without a word the transfer of the package was effected. "Foh de Lohd!" said John, inside of himself, "Ah wondah what dis is all about! Faithful unto death!" He comforted himself and disappeared across the foot of the garden, before his curiosity could induce him to break his trust.

"My eye!" quoth the accomplice, in his heart of hearts, "wot a goimel! Wonder where his nibs is!"

"I'm damned!" ruminated Bincker, outside the window. "It's a regular servants' plot to rob her," and he culled a stake from the nearest flower bed.

Pie Face was groping in bewildered darkness near the front steps.

Bincker stepped in through the open door.

"Hand over, you villain!" said he.

"'And over wot?" asked the accomplice, ostentatiously concealing the package with every symptom of delight.

"That package—Miss Goodwood's diamonds!" replied the hero, taking a firmer grip on his bludgeon.

Now, I ask you, could anything have gone better up to this point? Every step of the English magazine story had been carefully trodden in. But here race temperament, or something equally effective, took a hand. Bincker's next speech should have been, "I will give you just fifteen seconds by my gold watch and chain, at the end of which time I will call out the Fire Department," or something

of that sort. He did nothing of the kind. Instead, he leaped suddenly forward, and before James, the accomplice, could so much as shout, he had laid the young man out with the garden stake. Then he stooped over, removed the package from inside the young fellow's coat, and cut the seal to examine for the diamonds. At this moment, Pie Face, having extricated himself from the front lawn, in his turn looked through the window. With four bounds he covered the eight feet from the window to the kitchen door, and called out, in a firm but excited voice:

"Stop where you are!"

Bincker, the hero, stopped where he was, to look into the octagonal muzzle of Pie Face's self-cocking, five-shot, two-dollar-and-a-half, short-barreled, bulldog revolver. Pie Face furnished his own revolver. The village furnished the helmet.

"You come with me!" he said, solemnly.

Bincker looked at him with astonishment.

"What's the matter with you?" he cried. "Come and help me take this man to the station-house."

"You're the man who is going to the station-house," replied Pie Face.

"What?" shouted Bincker.

Pie Face repeated.

"But this man has robbed Miss Goodwood of her diamonds!" expostulated the hero; "they are here in this box."

"Yes," said Pie Face, with supernatural cunning; "I know Miss Goodwood's diamonds, and I know Miss Goodwood's servants. That story won't wash, my fine bird."

He liked the sound of this last.

The bulldog revolver had never been fired. Bincker looked at it. It might go off, and it might not explode. He rose.

"All right, you blank blanked blank of a blank," he said. "Lead ahead. I suppose you intend to leave this man here unconscious?"

"Oh, no," said Pie Face, sweetly; "you can carry him."

Bincker, the hero, carried James,

the accomplice. Pie Face followed, bearing the package of diamonds. In time they arrived at a small ex-grocery, which now served as a bureau of police. It was kept by a tall, red-haired youth with invisible eyebrows, ordinarily somnolent, but now aroused to the gibbering state by the alarming visit a few moments before of the inanest youth in search of the police.

"Oh, Pie—officer!" he shrieked, "Miss Goodwood has had——"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Pie Face, with conscious pride; "and here is the robber."

"He looks it!" cried the red-haired youth, placing his long legs nimbly behind the desk.

"And here are the diamonds," concluded the policeman, slapping the package dramatically on the table. "Lock the door, Tim, and help me with the bracelets."

Bincker was securely handcuffed. Pie Face deliberately unwrapped the package, disclosing thus a small pasteboard box. He opened the box. It contained one lower set of false teeth, a prophylactic tooth brush and a tube of Dr. Windman's Aromatic Cherry Paste.

"No diamonds!" cried Pie Face and the boy in one breath, and turned suspicious eyes on Bincker.

"Where have you concealed your ill-gotten gains?" demanded Pie Face, threateningly.

Bincker told them a number of things about the quality of their intelligence.

"We must search him," concluded Pie Face.

They searched violently, amid profanity and physical objection. Nothing. "The lining of his clothes!" cried Tim. Still nothing. They proceeded on the lines of Old Sleuth, becoming more fertile in hypotheses as the excitement warmed their combined recollection of that writer's many works. After they had torn off Bincker's boot heels, slit the lining of his clothes, fussed in his abundant hair, and examined carefully the cavity of his mouth, they had to confess themselves puzzled. In his bewilder-

ment Pie Face's stare chanced to fall on the paper Tim had let drop when the inanest youth rushed in. He remembered it well; in fact, he had himself lent it to his subordinate. It was called "Diamond Dick's Craft; or, The Story of a Young Desperado's Deed in the African Mines." Like a flash came the recollection of the means that worthy had employed to recover a stolen gem from a dishonest Kaffir.

"Tim," he cried, "look in the cupboard, and bring me the bottle marked 'Syrup of Ipecac.'"

Tim understood at once. He also brought the horse bucket.

"How much 'd we ought to give him?" he asked.

"I dunno," Pie Face acknowledged. "We'll give him enough."

They did. Bincker, the hero, had to be held down and his nose pinched shut before he would swallow.

After this method had failed to make him disgorge his ill-gotten gains, another puzzled pause ensued. Bincker made himself heard.

"Now, you dashed dashed blank of a mastodon—" he began, then paused, and continued, more slowly, with vast irony: "It must be evident even to your feeble intelligence that I have not the diamonds. In fact, if you had used the pint of corn soup you call your brains, you would have seen that I could not possibly have had time to take them from the package and conceal them. Your suspicions must naturally rest on the servants."

They did. Pie Face eyed the still unconscious James with a malevolent eye, and thoughtfully shook the ipecac bottle.

"Furthermore, as the package does not contain the diamonds now, and has evidently been loaded to give the impression of weight, said loading must have been done for the purpose of fooling the one who was to receive them—that boy there."

"Then John, the butler, has them!" shouted Pie Face, wild with excitement.

"You *have* got a glimmer of sense."

replied Bincker, wearily. "Perhaps now you will let me loose."

"Unlock them cuffs! Shut up James in the closet till I git back!" shouted Pie Face, and seizing his two-dollar-and-a-half revolver, he rushed wildly from the door.

The household to which he at once directed himself had partially calmed. Miss Tibbs alone had retired with a violent headache. John's and James's absence had been explained by Miss Goodwood's assertion that she had sent them on errands, so the subsequent reappearance of the butler caused no remark. The inanest youth had returned from alarming the police. Only Mr. Bincker and James were unaccounted for. After a time Miss Goodwood became so nervous over the prolonged absence of her two principal performers that she made an excuse and slipped away down the lonely road to the deserted house. The others speculated feverishly in the dining-room. Without preliminary, Pie Face, red to the point of apoplexy, burst in upon them.

"John! John!" he gasped, shaking the muzzle of his deadly weapon at the inanest youth.

"Yes, yes, my good man," quavered the inanest youth, dodging, "what do you want?"

"John!" repeated Pie Face, explosively.

"He wants the butler," said the most collected dearest friend, and rang the bell. John, after a decent interval, appeared.

"Hold up your hands!" roared Pie Face, and advanced on his shuddering victim, paying not the slightest heed to the exclamations and questions of the rest of the party.

"What 've I did?" implored the chattering John. "Oh, say, Mistah Offisah, what 've I did?"

Not a word answered Pie Face, but thrust his hands into his prisoner's pockets and drew forth in triumph a paper package, which he requested the inanest youth to open. The latter obeyed.

"What do you find?" inquired Pie Face, with fine dramatic effect.

"The diamonds!" cried the inanest youth.

A stupefied instant followed. Then John craned his neck forward and laughed uncertainly.

"You done t'ink Ah stole dem di'monds," he cackled. "You done fool yo'self. Ah no steal dem di'monds. Dem di'monds is *mine*!"

At this effrontery Pie Face yanked John about until his teeth chattered, while he detailed to his interested audience how he had shadowed John to his trysting place, and had secured James, the accomplice. He omitted mention of Bincker, the hero.

"So to jail with yuh!" he snarled, like Sly Sikes, the boy detective.

"Dey's mine, Ah tells yo'—dey's mine!" howled John, in a paroxysm of terror, and dragging back like a badly trained setter dog. "If yo' don' believe dat, ask Miss Nellie!"

"What's the matter?" cried that young woman, arriving out of breath from the empty cottage.

She learned the facts from five people at once. The inanest youth showed her the diamonds.

"Those aren't my diamonds," she exclaimed at once; "they are some false Alaska stones I bought for John's wife."

Pie Face gave an imitation of a man dropping a red-hot negro.

"Done tells yo' dey's mine!" growled the latter, sulkily.

"Then where *are* the diamonds?" they all cried.

"What diamonds?" queried a new voice from the doorway. "What's all this row about?"

The company whirled sharply on its heels, to discover Mr. Goodwood, who had returned on a late train from the city.

"*My* diamonds!" explained Miss Goodwood, beginning to cry. "They're stolen."

Mr. Goodwood looked considerably astonished. "Why, what are you talking about, Nellie?" said he; "I have your diamonds here in my coat pocket."

"You!" they shouted.

"Yes, I. Why shouldn't I? You

wrote me you wanted them for a dinner party on the twenty-fifth, so I brought them down to-night."

"You're a little late, aren't you?" sobbed his daughter, hysterically. "The dinner is all over."

"But to-day is only the twenty-fourth," cried Mr. Goodwood.

"Is it?" appealed the girl, miserably.

They assured her it was.

"Now, I want to understand what all the row is about," requested Mr. Goodwood, seating himself comfortably in an armchair. "Why is my good friend, the officer, here; and why are you all so excited?"

Nellie had been thinking rapidly.

"Well, you see, papa, when I started out I thought I'd get up a joke on everybody, so I arranged to have the diamonds stolen by John and James. Just pretend, you know. And then, when we discovered they weren't here at all, we became alarmed. A package was delivered just about dinner, and I concluded, *of course*, it must contain the diamonds."

That was all she really had to tell at the time; now, wasn't it?

"Had to use real diamonds, I suppose. Pebbles from the garden walk wouldn't have done just as well, of course," commented Mr. Goodwood, ironically.

His daughter looked foolish.

"You see by this," he preached, pleased at the success of his sarcasm, "the importance of great accuracy." He rose and placed his hands behind his coat-tails. "I have been in business a great many years, and I have had this borne in on me time without end. It is a natural human failing, I suppose, and yet it can be, to a great extent, eradicated by careful attention. Such training as I get, for instance, makes such attention practically a second nature."

Still smiling, he drew a packet from his coat-tail pocket.

"Here are the famous diamonds," said he.

He proceeded leisurely to cut the

string, which he rolled neatly and placed on a corner of the mantel, and opened the box.

"Suffering giraffes!" he screamed. In his hand he held extended a pearl-and-silver teething ring.

Overdrawn emotion honored no further drafts. A silence fell.

"Oh, poppa!" wailed Miss Goodwood. "Where did you get it?"

"Get it!" howled her father. "Get it! I've been robbed on the train! Do you think I'm buying teething rings? Do you think I don't know a teething ring from a diamond necklace?"

"Don't believe there *is* no diamond necklace," muttered Pie Face.

Mr. Goodwood was a man of resource and considerable influence. An hour later, by the coöperation of pencil, paper, John and the telegraph operator, the police of the great city of New York were conducting a round-up of crooks from which the fraternity now dates time. And that is saying a good deal.

And then, after the last despatch had gone singing on its way, and Mr. Goodwood was beginning to bask a bit in his rehabilitated self-esteem, a loud peal at the front door bell turned rearoused interest to that quarter. John returned, followed by a young man in a check suit and a derby hat.

"Why, Simpkins!" exclaimed the head of the house, "what's up?"

"I knew it was important, sir, so I caught the next train after you," replied Simpkins. "You left Miss Goodwood's diamonds on your desk when you went out, and knowing that you fully intended taking them, and the safe being shut, I brought them. Hope I did right, sir?"

"Quite right, quite right, Simpkins," hemmed Mr. Goodwood, out of countenance. He looked bewilderedly across the table to the package he had brought. "But I wonder where I got that teething ring."

"Beg your pardon, sir, it's mine," put in Simpkins. "I bought it for a friend who has a baby, but I don't

know how you came to take it, as I placed it very carefully with my coat."

At this evidence of carelessness Mr. Goodwood collapsed.

"And I wonder whose is the tooth brush and the tooth paste——"

"Mine," tittered Miss Tibbs, through the crack of the door, where she had been listening.

"And the false teeth," finished Pie Face, relentlessly.

The door slammed.

"And I wonder what can have become of poor Mr. Bincker," marveled Miss Goodwood, in her turn.

John grinned maliciously at Pie Face. "He done gone to baid," said

he. "All he clothes spiled, and he powe'ful mad 'bout it. He kill somebody, come mahnin'."

"Oh, Lord!" said Pie Face to himself. "How will I fix it with Mr. Bincker and James?"

"Suffering giraffes!" groaned Mr. Goodwood. "I'll never be able to square it with the New York police!"

"Gracious!" cried Miss Goodwood's repentant inner spirit. "How am I ever going to explain it to everybody when the truth comes out?"

John, butler and villain, alone was calm.

And this is the only story ever written in which the hero, alive or dead, does not appear in the finale.



MECCA

WHAT need have I to journey to the East,
 To seek that Mecca prized by gods and man?
 No sultry, sand-swept desert need I cross,
 In some slow-crawling camel caravan;
 Instead, a hansom cab, a ring, a maid—
 And I am at the threshold of the shrine
 Toward which, a pilgrim, I have turned my face—
 The riches of the Orient are mine.

Beneath a dusky canopy of state,
 My Lady greets me from her cushioned throne.
 Set round with all the splendors of the East;
 And in my adoration I am prone
 To make salaam low at her slippered feet. . . .
 Here is my Kaaba, here I feast my eyes
 On stuffs from Persia and from Daghestan;
 This is my Mecca, this my Paradise.

ALBERT HARDY.



NOT NEGLECTING IT

BANKS—Are you taking anything for your cold?

TANKS—Of course. Did you think I had sworn off?

SINGED WINGS

By J. H. Twells, Jr.

THE spirit of silence that had taken possession of Bob Thornton's abode had, during the long hours while he sat alone in the tea-room, assumed a strangely significant substantiality, like the presence of one whose personality subjugated his own. He felt it in the very familiar objects about him. It looked at him with round, wondering eyes from the peacock's tail in the Japanese screen, and leered at him from the queer Egyptian toggerly his young wife Elinor had gathered together with such glee scarcely two years before.

Elinor! The name seemed suggestive of something he did not understand. Yet he felt her influence in everything about him. She would come out soon, he thought, from the pretty room adjoining, which he and she had shared so short a time before.

His head fell heavily upon his hand; his eyes were closed. Beneath them dark shadows accentuated the unusual pallor of his face.

For more than a month he had shut himself up in the house, scarcely ever leaving it, even to obtain fresh air. Friends had come to visit him now and again. He had received them without experiencing any sense of gratitude, and with a mien of exaggerated dolefulness.

Terine, at the request of Thornton's aunt, remained with him to look after the house during the first season of his mourning. Terine! It was from her he sought most to conceal himself, because of the shameful secret in his heart.

It seemed impossible for him to realize the truth, even after this lapse

of time, or to comprehend the sense of dramatic unreality that seemed to be the only effect of it all upon his mind.

Some terrible strain was over; his nature had appreciated that, and his mind, had sunk into a peaceful lethargy of relief.

Now, as he sat alone in this room, for the first time since his wife's death, he struggled to overcome that other feeling which existed apart from his sorrow. He became drowsy, and slept. In his sleep he heard silken curtains stirring faintly, like his wife's gown. He dreamed that he was ill, and she near him, tending him with the quiet affection so peculiarly her own. He could see her slight form bending over him, and her eyes, looking down, seemed to penetrate into the very core of his being. Her mere presence in the dream served to soothe a real ache that he could neither locate nor define. He could feel her hand, warm and tender, and yet its touch was strange, so unlike the strong pressure he expected. His eyes opened. Elinor's cousin, Terine, stood near him.

Her dark, almond-shaped eyes burned strangely under their lowered lashes. As he looked, he felt the fever of them entering his veins, and he experienced a sense of emotional fear, like that with which a woodman meets unexpectedly the eyes of some wild thing preparing to attack him.

"Dear Bob," she said, her voice, always modulated, lowered with infinite tenderness, "I hate to wake you, but—is there any particular wish of hers you would like to have attended to?"

He gazed at her in bewilderment. "Wish?" he repeated. "Of whose? I don't understand."

"Any wish of—Elinor's, any wish about—her things?" Her glance shifted; she touched the chair on which he sat with her long, nervous fingers, that seemed out of keeping with the beautiful full figure and lovely face. "We are going to put them away to-day. I thought perhaps——"

He was still staring at her; he made no sound, but a strange grayish pallor overspread his face.

Then he rose. "I wish to go in there," he said, dully. "Don't let anyone come in, please."

As he crossed to the door of his wife's room Terine's eyes followed him. Through narrowed lids they measured his tall form with a glance of calculating admiration, and her full, red lips met each other more closely.

Thornton entered the half-open door timidly, and closed it behind him.

The room was cool and darkened; the curtain stirred, making the sound that had haunted his dream. This room had been theirs together; all the little knick-knacks, the pictures, the bureau with its dainty furnishings, spoke to him of her, and seemed to harbor in some mysterious way her very living identity.

He looked searchingly at little inanimate things; his eyes avoided the bed.

Between him and an exquisite statuette of Aphrodite seemed to rise the dark, passionate face of Terine. Her smile was like an insult to the room's silence, but he thrilled under its allurements.

A still voice said, "You are free! you are free!" He heard it with the same sensation as that of a child who hears a playfellow calling as he stands between the knees of a beloved parent, listening to affectionate admonition.

The atmosphere of the room seemed charged with tender reproof.

"Elinor!" He spoke the name twice, softly, in the effort to appreciate more clearly the truth that he seemed incapable of grasping.

Under the influence of a great, although undemonstrative love Elinor had renounced much that was dear to her to become his wife. He had loved her from the time he first saw her, but his love had been tempered with a somewhat subservient awe that nearly two years of married life had not lessened. She had controlled him by the strength of her reserved nature, keeping his exuberant spirit in check, and thus, while preventing satiety, engendering a vague discontent, of which he himself was scarcely conscious.

Slowly there had developed in him a spirit of quiet revolt against the gentle sovereignty of his wife.

The element of selfishness that exists, either dormant or dominant, in many men was late in awakening in Bob Thornton, for it had been his good fortune to have his earliest emotions aroused by one who was stronger than he; and his better nature had profited by the finest influence a man can know—that of a strong, generous and loving woman.

When Death, with his usual fine discrimination, had become enamored of her, his rival, Life, warm with the fever of youth, had started the springs of unconquerable unrest in the man. And Life in this case was personated by Terine.

Before his marriage, Elinor's cousin, with all her subtle femininity and knowledge of the world, had by a word revealed to him her secret. At that time there had been for him but one woman. He saw nothing in the eyes of others, seeking always, with an eager hunger, for the light in hers that he adored, that yet, by her calm self-control, was so often withheld. Elinor was, unfortunately, his first love; she had been intended by nature to be the last love of a fully developed man. Thornton had not been fully developed. When he met her he was but twenty-five, and a life of scholarly pursuit and ambitious endeavor had not stunted the qualities that made it possible for him to recognize the superiority of her nature. He gave her, wholly and solely,

all that was best of himself, all that partook of God in his nature, and found in his relations to her a joyousness that was in some way apart from the man.

To some men a wife is a necessity, to others an excitement, to more a reckless indulgence, and, to a very few, a complement of self, as Elinor was intended to be to him.

Nearly every man has two sides to his being—the innocent, godly, flower-loving boy nature, marked only by the image of his mother's face; and the man nature, marked by the harness of existence, hardened, scarred, periodically vicious, and contemptuous of the things loved in childhood. Between the two, at a certain age, there exists a connecting medium of susceptible emotions by which the hand of a woman may control either the one or the other. Thus, under his wife's influence, everything good in Thornton's nature had been brought to the fore ere the evil had been so much as stirred. But during the interval of enforced loneliness during her illness he had been taken unawares by the insidious allurements of the beautiful Terine.

As he stood there near his wife's bureau, with all the sweet, familiar objects about him crying out as with the dead woman's voice, he felt in himself this temptation of Terine in conflict with the reverence and anguish that the room seemed to impose. He became conscious of a fretful desire to get away alone, and even of a hunger for a cigar. There had developed in him of late a spirit of self-indulgence that he had never known under Elinor's influence; a sense of irresponsibility, even of recklessness, that he feared to investigate, and that made him feel, for the first time in his life, a veritable self-contempt.

In the loneliness of the room he seemed for the moment like a stranger standing by his old self, sneering at the faint struggles of his better nature with the cruel derision of a coward. In an impulse of shame he turned toward the bed. He fell on his knees by the side of it, burying his face in

his hands quickly that he might not see its emptiness.

Outside the door, just where he had left her, stood Terine, gravely thoughtful, dreamily beautiful, a picture of grace. Her lashes lay dark on the creamy whiteness of her cheek and caught on their silky length a blue lustre from the light of the window. She seemed like a hovering spirit as she stood listening. No sound reached her from within save the curtains' faint rustle. She smiled a little, and opened the door quietly.

Thornton was still kneeling, with his face buried in his hands. She approached and laid her hand gently on his bowed head. A warm glow infused his blood at the touch; the lethargy that had succeeded the wearying agony in his mind changed suddenly to a sort of delirious excitement.

As he raised his head he beheld first the empty bed. It was like a reproof. A sense of helplessness settled upon him, like that which Napoleon must have experienced in the hour when he first realized that all connection with his old life was destroyed forever. It awoke a feeling of revulsion toward the woman who stood near him. Because he was unable to fully grasp the painful significance of it, he disliked her silent scrutiny. Could he have wept or cried aloud, or given any expression to the emotions that he rather felt called upon to suffer than really experienced, her presence would not have jarred, but, as it was, it seemed to harbor an insult to his wife's memory. He bowed his head again lower than before.

"I should like to be alone," he said.

Terine's lids fluttered and her lips compressed. "Forgive me," she returned, in so soft a tone as to be scarcely audible, yet one which conveyed the impression of reproach.

With his face hidden in his hands Thornton heard the faint rustle of her skirts as she departed. All thought of his dead wife vanished. Against the blackness of his closed eyes he saw Terine's supple form, her blue-black

hair and ivory skin, the reproach in her eyes. He tried to pray, to feel sad, straining against some seductive allurements of the senses in an effort to recall vividly any incident of his life with Elinor that had made the enduring hour complete; some book they had read together, some mighty subject they had discussed with the even comprehension of equally poised minds. But while he struggled, that other influence allured him with resistless pertinacity. "Elinor! Elinor!" he groaned, "come back! . . . Oh, God! don't leave me like this, all of you, even the memory!"

For an instant a glowing recollection of their intimate relations, of their inseparable wholeness in each other, stirred in him an emotion of self-pity. It was not that the young life, so beautiful and strongly generous, had been extinguished; it was that part of himself was dead—the stronger part. Then he was afraid, with a sudden panic of fear, as if a hand that had steadied his bark had been withdrawn, leaving him alone on rough waters.

His very misery made his mind revert anew to the other influence. With that ever-recurring thought of Terine came a reckless desire to go to her, to obtain the comfort of her living sympathy.

He rose, without lifting his eyes, and left the room.

Terine was sitting by the tea-room window, her chin in her hand. He took a seat near her. They sat so for a few moments in silence—a silence surcharged with pent excitement.

She watched him furtively, and though his eyes were averted, he felt the scrutiny of hers.

"You must get away, Bob," she said, finally. "Come down to Lakewood for a week or two; Aunt Rachael and I are going down Thursday."

He did not answer; his eyes were fixed on the rug, his head bent forward. To her he appeared the personification of broken-hearted dejection; and he realized that he appeared so, even while there was in his mind a vivid picture of Lakewood, and of

himself walking with her in the sunlight of early Spring.

The significance of his bereavement seemed to have lost all relation to himself; he craved bodily comfort, ease and indulgence. The check-rein of his life had relaxed with the removal of its better incentive, and, in obedience to the man-instincts in him, his nature began to awaken to a new freedom that it had never consciously craved—a freedom that meant merely a release from absolute contentment of mind and subjection of body.

He raised his head, and his eyes met hers. Beneath her glance he trembled, translating into it a maddening meaning. Its effect was like a draught of brandy. He rose unsteadily and walked away.

"Don't look at me!" he said, between his teeth. "For God's sake, let me be alone with—my sorrow."

Terine looked after him oddly; she understood his mood better than did he, and recognized, with a woman's quick discernment, the power she had attained over him.

"Why don't you go to the library?" she said, gently. "The others will be here soon, and their talk will annoy you. I know how you feel, Bob, dear. Light a cigar, and try to keep your thoughts off—things."

He turned and looked at her; his face softened. "I am heartbroken," he said, dully. "You know that, don't you?"

She drew near to him. "Know it?" she said, in a tone of infinite sympathy and tenderness. Then she took his hand between her long, warm hands and looked up into his face. "Poor boy!"

Their eyes met and blasphemed the silence.

Something like fire passed into his veins at her touch, and the look she gave him burned into his soul. It was like a blighting sun on the garden of his life, where all that was beautiful had grown in a sort of unending morning.

"Yes, I think I'll go to Lakewood," he said, faintly. Then he moved to the door. "I seem to feel it all so

deeply to-day. . . . Let no one touch her things; no one but you. You do everything, Terine, only you; she would wish it so."

Thornton paced the library in restless excitement, with which was mingled a strangely reckless joy that made him despise himself. He locked his hands back of him with painful force, and tried hard to be sad.

"My wife is dead," he said, half-aloud, "dead! Elinor! I shall never see her again!"

Outside a man was crying, "Strawberries! Strawberries!"

The sound entered his mind and echoed over and over again like a cry of his own, changing strangely into "I am free! I am free!"

He sank into a low easy-chair and lighted a cigar. With the first fragrant puff of smoke his nature relaxed into a sweet repose.

He saw again the subtle question in Terine's eyes; the face so beautiful in its creamy whiteness; the flexible, peculiarly formed lips, moving under every breath of emotion. With his eyes half-closed he felt her near him again—the glowing warmth of her, the caressing tenderness, the subtle and powerful femininity that drugged his senses like some elixir of dreams. He trembled with the consciousness that, were the experience to be repeated, some force in him would give way, and an ache which existed back of that would be stilled.

Terine, too, was restless, but being a woman, she could find no solace in the deceptions of fantasy. Her nature was stirred by a fierce impatience. He was the one love of her life, representing a desire that completely possessed her passionate will.

"I must get him away," she said, as she stared, unseeing, before her. She sat thus for a long time. "Poor Elinor!" she breathed at last. Her face softened for a moment. Then her lips tightened and her brows lowered. "But it is better so. It would have happened sooner or later; it is better that she cannot know and

suffer. Oh, God! I love him! I love him!"

Four days later Thornton found himself at Lakewood, walking with Terine through the pine woods.

He was neither sad nor happy, but in that intermediate mood which is like a coma of the spirit, and is the ultimate state of prolonged emotion. He wished to be with her always, dreading solitude, and yet suffering a strange sense of irritation from the very satisfaction of her presence.

In the evenings, with the full moon above them, and with soft breezes sighing in the ever-faithful firs and balmy with the breath of Spring, they would often walk or sit in silence—a silence fraught with its own meaning to each. She saw it was the calm after the storm, and waited for the sunshine to follow. He recognized what seemed the sweet subserviency of her mood to his, and translated it, with a tender glow at his heart, as ineffable sympathy.

Without stopping to investigate his need of sympathy, he permitted, nay, wished, her attitude toward him to masquerade in this guise while he tried to ignore her individuality, and to regard her congeniality to him as merely feminine and as that of a relative of his wife. In this attitude there seemed some apology for his weakness in remaining with her and seeing her daily, week after week.

But after a time it became a struggle for him to close his mind to the underlying significance of her bearing, which grew less guarded. Her eyes challenged him; the touch of her hand on his arm seemed charged, at times, with a thrillingly emotional suggestion. The periods of silence lost their peaceful calm.

"I have never known any other man of your age to look on life in that way," she was saying, one afternoon, in answer to some remark of his, as they sat on a bench near the lake. "Boys, who have known only artificial emotions, believe that they can love but once; men who have lived know better."

"Then I have never lived," he said, doggedly; "and if to live means to have every beautiful theory of life destroyed, I should prefer to stagnate."

The words were a poor disguise to the struggle he was undergoing. She gave him a side glance of pitying amusement, which she did not intend he should see; but Thornton looked up on the instant, and as he beheld the light in her eyes and the unsteady smile on her lips, which became sympathetically grave under his glance, his color changed quickly.

"We were speaking generally, I thought," she said, quietly, and looked away from him with a slight fluttering of her lovely lashes. "It will be best not to be personal—if we can help it." The last words were spoken softly, and were intense with deep feeling.

He leaned near to her, bending his head, so that his whispered words might reach her. "There is something about you," he said, "that both allures and repels me; I don't know if I hate or love you." He spoke fiercely, but although she felt his quick breath on her cheek she did not stir.

He rose suddenly and stood looking across the lake. "I'm going away," he said, brusquely.

"When?" she asked, after a moment.

"Immediately—to-morrow."

She made no protest. Her silence goaded him to passionate anger; he at once dreaded and longed to have her give some sign that might excuse in him an impetuous outbreak.

"Why should I stay here, eating my heart out?" he went on, irritably. "You cannot understand—and what do you care, after all?"

The intemperate childishness of the words made her smile a little. "That is like a man," she said, with gentle reproach.

He looked down at her, then seated himself beside her. "Would you care if I go?" he asked, unsteadily. "What difference could it make to you?"

"I should not like to think of your being all alone, feeling as you do." There was in her tone an accent of reproof which chilled him. The

weak, half-formed desire to draw her close to him, to speak to her delirious words, faded under a bitter self-reproach.

He felt toward her what exactly she had intended he should feel—a sense of shame, mingled with instinctive appreciation of her seeming respect for his wife's memory. The feeling puzzled and piqued him as to her real attitude toward him.

Terine was too clever a woman not to realize how important a factor was time in the accomplishment of her aims, and how untrustworthy are immature developments. Having sown her seed, with a daring of which only such natures are capable, in the very blood of his first great sorrow, her influence had grown in the wound, filling and disguising it as a wayward vine conceals the gaping of splintered rock. After a time, therefore, she even persuaded him to go away. With instinctive reasoning she decided that a limited separation would be advantageous to her plans.

And he, inspired by the nature of his wife, fancied he saw in her attitude a noble incentive and a self-sacrificing delicacy.

It was in obedience to his own interpretation of her advice that he determined, after a moral struggle, to go to Europe. The news of his decision was a shock to Terine, for, in advising him to go away, she had not stipulated for so decided a separation.

The evening he told her of his decision they were seated in the drawing-room of her aunt's town house. She did not stir for an instant, merely repeating the words, with gentle interrogation: "To Europe?"

"Yes; I have been thinking over what you advised," returned Thornton. "You are right, Terine, I need a decided change. Somehow— Oh, I despise myself, and I don't wonder that you have a—contempt for me." He spoke softly, with a certain tremulous restraint eloquent of the half-weak and half-determined mood that possessed him.

She gave him a slow, searching

glance. As she read the emotion in his face by the averted eyes and twitching lips, that revealed how shallowly his determination concealed a weak yearning for some sign in her that might excuse his renouncing it, she understood in a flash how her threatening impulse to stay him would destroy his faith in her. It was a question of self-control if she was to win; she realized this, and lowered her eyes lest an anxious gleam might undo his resolve.

Although his proposed departure contained the threatening possibility of new and perhaps alluring elements entering his life, she felt that her best policy was to meet it with the same strength as that with which she had proposed their separation.

Thornton watched her, drinking in her splendid beauty with ill-controlled ardor, and expectant of some tender word to prevent his going, some evidence of sentimental regret that might excuse his venting the passion that surged below an artificial calm, and above a vague, but deep-rooted dread of the very thing he craved.

"How long shall you be away?" she asked, bending her head as she turned an opal ring that encircled her slender finger like a hoop of flame.

He looked at his boots. "Probably into the Fall," he returned, dully.

There was a silence. To both the faint ticking of the French clock became apparent, and, like a flash, there returned to their minds the thought of a room scented faintly with sandalwood, where such a ticking had mingled with the soft rustle of curtains, which now, in memory, was like the stirring of ghostly garments. They felt again the significant stillness of that other room, and for the briefest space of time their spirits separated as if someone stood between them silently.

Then Terine revolted. She put the memory away with a passionate movement that brought Thornton back, with a sense of pleasure, to the living presence. It was a return to his new identity, that which her influence created and stimulated. He

was glad to return. Of late he had deliberately put away the thought of Elinor whenever it occurred, indulging, as a counteraction, any inclination that might happen to possess him at the moment. This palpable change in him even Terine could not wholly approve. She began to miss in him a certain refinement in his appreciation of the subtler points of life which had formerly charmed her. He showed less self-control, was more irritable, and evinced that insatiable and unscrupulous greed for sensation which characterizes men who live only for the present. All this appealed intensely to her temperament, but the woman in her grieved for what he had lost.

"You will go—where?" she asked, quietly.

"Probably to Italy."

Italy, in his susceptible condition! Across her mind flashed a vision of beautiful, dark-eyed women, moonlight and balconies, music and flowers.

"Why Italy?" she said. "You should go to an invigorating climate. In your condition Italy would only depress you more. Go to Norway or—Scotland—some place where your environment will serve as a tonic, rather than weaken you with emotional excitements."

He looked at her thoughtfully. "You're a strange woman," he said, softly, and his grave scrutiny unnerved her almost to the point of throwing her reason to the winds and imploring him not to leave her. She clenched her hand till the ring cut cruelly into her fingers before the impulse passed; then she said, quietly, with a little smile, at once tender and indifferent, "In what way?"

"Why do you want to be rid of me?" he asked, in answer. "Are you tired?"

"I am considering only your own happiness, Bob."

"Do you think, then, I shall be happy ten thousand miles away, that you choose Norway or Scotland for me to visit alone?"

"Yes; only such a journey can

divide the past from the present," she replied, softly, realizing with fright, as soon as the words were spoken, how much more they expressed than she had intended.

He leaned toward her, growing pale. His eyes were fixed sternly and questioningly on her averted face. "You mean—" he began, then paused. Presently, in a changed tone, he went on: "Yes, you are right, Terine. I have never seen Scotland. I'll go there."

That was all, but his words brought a pain to her heart that grew to a terrible dread after his departure.

During the five long days of his voyage she missed him terribly. He had filled a vacancy in her life which no other man had occupied—that vacancy where a woman's god, master, or child is set, and by the adequate occupancy of which existence is made complete. Terine was a type of those women created by man himself through generation upon generation of servile adoration; who live by men, and in whom many of the qualities supposed to be necessary to women are absolutely lacking; beings of world-cultured passions, with whose composition God has had very little to do.

When the time necessary for a letter to reach her expired without any word coming from him she was in despair. She blamed herself, not him, feeling that her decision had been premature, her calculations fool's play. Two weeks had sufficed to cool the fever with which her presence had made his eyes burn. Why had she sent him away in his impressionable mood? After all, if she had permitted him to speak there would have existed a tie between them, at least; even if he loved her less, he would have been hers!

She had suffered a good deal for this man, more than he or anyone guessed. When he married her cousin it had almost broken her spirit, for, in loving him, she had humbled herself in a way doubly severe to one of her temperament. Such women suffer intensely because

their emotions are all self-centred. To the egotist, love denied is as cruel as death.

On the twentieth day after Thornton's departure she began to meditate means of bringing him back to her.

She was sitting in the room where they had last been together; for the fifth time she had written to him and destroyed the letter. She knew the treachery of written words, and dreaded lest the effect of absence and distance might have so changed his mood as to render what she should write only an additional incentive to their separation. The anxiety had made her nervous. Like a general who has made his first *mauvais coup*, she was stung by self-contempt, telling herself it was by her own stupidity that she had lost him. There appeared to be but one thing to do, and that was to go to him, to bring the power of her personality to bear upon him. Then her eyes became fierce with rebellion against her own passion.

"Why should I want him?" she thought. "Is there any strength in such a man? Even as he watched his young wife die, he loved me, and now—"

She glanced up at the sound of someone approaching, to behold Thornton standing in the doorway. He looked thinner and paler; his splendid eyes, that were fixed on her, were sunken. She stared at him with a look almost of fear.

"I had to come back," he said, constrainedly, as he crossed the room and stood with his hand clutching the back of a chair. "I missed the first ship."

Terine rose in a storm of conflicting emotions. In her clenched hand were the fragments of the letter she had written him.

As her surprise passed there came to her a strange dissatisfaction that he should be there, a sense of irritation against him that she had never felt during the anguish caused by his absence and silence. Then she recognized the absolute self-surrender expressed in his face, and realized, with

a thrill of somewhat contemptuous triumph, that the victory she had thought lost was wholly hers.

Her silence and seeming indifference, that greeted the joyous glow with which he came into her presence and realized the sweet familiarity of the room, inspired Thornton with an unreasoning fear that his return meant nothing to her. "Have you nothing to say?" he asked, unsteadily.

She raised her head a little, and he saw her beautiful lips, with the light on them, curve slightly with tender amusement. Instantly some element of self-possession in him gave way; his brain whirled.

"Why did you return so soon?" she asked. Whereupon he strode toward her, blindly, and took her in his arms.

"Because I can't live without you!" he said, with reckless passion. "Because——"

As he felt her relaxed form leaning against him, the warm life in her responding to his, with her glorious head thrown back upon his shoulder, the lips half-parted, the eyes half-closed, all meaning of speech left him. He bent over, and their lips met lingeringly. The kiss brought a delirious content, beyond which there seemed nothing, neither memory nor hope.

"We would be happy together," he whispered. "Terine, will you come into my life and fill the—make it complete? Tell me that you will."

For answer she kissed him again, with a slow and deliberate abandon that overpowered his senses, as might some insidious opiate.

Late in the day, when he had left her, and while a sense of his new obligation to her weighed on him strangely, there came to him an irresistible impulse to visit the little home where the two years of his married life had been passed.

The place was dark and silent. The furniture and pictures were wrapped in white sheets and netting. In the little tea-room a scent of sandalwood greeted him like a voice long absent; it stirred in him a deep pang of anguish and loss.

There seemed to be someone in the room whose presence was a strangely penetrating reproach. He opened the shutter a little because he feared the shadow and silence—and the presence.

Then he dragged the sheet from her favorite chair. As he beheld the familiar upholstery he saw her again; not the woman, but the angel spirit that had predominated the woman. He felt again the cowardly shrinking of his nature before her eyes, a desperate hatred of the lie he had lived during the last two months of her life, and shame for his treason to her memory during the seven months since her death.

On the desk by which he had been accustomed to work lay a pile of manuscript—his last literary effort. There came to his mind a vivid recollection of her, sitting by that desk in a flowing lavender wrapper, her small head bowed over his work, her beautiful hand tracing and pruning it with the interest and pride of a mother. In his earlier life poverty had lashed his ambition and subjugated him to the control of such a woman; later, wealth had come unexpectedly, from a distant relative whose heir he had never dreamed to be. It was shortly after that Elinor fell ill; possibly through a kind prescience of the God who ruled her life. Now, as he looked on this work of her hand intersecting his own lines, it seemed like an inarticulate voice pleading for his lost ambition and neglected duty.

In remembering her there was no discrimination of sex, and no regret for her as a woman; he suffered because with her he had lost a part of himself which he felt could never be regained. In this persuasion was embodied a compunction of conscience that brought about a certain reckless dread of investigating what he had lost, like that known by one who has committed a crime in a rash moment by which his righteousness is forever destroyed.

It was growing very dark; across the room gray shadows fell oddly. He sank into a chair and closed his eyes.

He became aware of outside sounds,

the tread of horses, the hum of automobiles, the various audible indications of extravagant life. Through the open window drifted the fragrance of a cigar. He thought of dinner, and realized that he was hungry. He yawned with deliberate noisiness and stretched himself; he wished to repudiate the judgment of the room's silence.

As he closed the window he said, aloud, "I'll sell the place. Why should I cling to sentimentalities? I am young—why should I not do as every man does who has to live? My life is changed—changed forever, and I might as well make the best of it."

He crossed the room without looking at anything. The street door closed behind him with a clang.

At dinner he drank heavily; then he went to Terine in a delightful state of susceptibility.

He found her in the Turkish room,

reclining on a divan amid mountains of downy pillows and under a high lamp, by the light of which she was dipping languidly into a luxurious volume of Swinburne's poems. As Thornton appeared she laid the book aside, and clasping her hands behind her head, leaned back with easeful grace into the pillows. She looked enchanting; her white arms gleamed in the dull light, and in her eyes were alluringly mingled reproof and love.

"Well, have you had a pleasant day?" she asked, with playful irony. "I was beginning to think you had started again for Scotland."

He sat down beside her heavily and drew her to him almost roughly.

"I have been settling my account with the past," he said. "I closed it to-day forever."

Then he kissed her on the brow and eyes and mouth.



CIRCUMSTANCES

AN iron-willed giant rules my life;
He thwarts my every wish and aim,
And jeering, turns to travesty
My grasp at Fame.

He hears me give the rover's cry,
And straightway pins me to one spot,
One narrow corner on the map—
A ground-worm's lot.

He blinds the eyes of him I love,
And holds me down with those I hate;
Cowering, I curse my tangled life,
And call it *Fate*.

To whimper at the gods—what use?
'Twere only making cowardice weak;
Smile at life's irony—and turn
The other cheek.

C. E. C.

THE UNUSUAL THING

By Ruth Milne

MRS. MARTIN sat at the inlaid desk in the library, alternately writing and staring absently at her oblivious husband. Obviously, she was writing a letter; obviously, also, the letter was difficult to write. It was, in fact, the sort of letter that a woman might be expected to write in her own rooms behind closed doors; but Mrs. Martin was continually under the necessity of doing the unusual thing in order to live up to her conception of herself as an unusual woman. Gradually the periods of writing diminished in number and length, and finally lapsed entirely into meditation—patently concerning some still more unusual thing to be done. Her thoughts were accompanied by little smiles denoting satisfaction and frowns denoting difficulty.

Mrs. Martin was young, good-looking and well-to-do; Mrs. Martin had been married over two years, and had yet to discover what it was to be thwarted in a serious wish; yet Mrs. Martin was not happy. She was, on the contrary, so distinctly unhappy as to be in the act of composing a letter to Mr. Martin explaining that life with him had become unendurable, and that she was about to leave him to go with one who satisfied the inner longings of a nature that he, Mr. Martin, had wholly failed to comprehend. That was the substance of the first sentence in her letter. So much had been easy to write, and it had strongly appealed to Mrs. Martin's sense of the unusual to write it after dinner in the library, with Mr. Martin reading his newspaper before the fire. What she had failed to realize before-

hand was the difficulty of completing the undertaking—a difficulty that grew more and more marked with every glance at her unsuspecting husband.

In order to make the writing of such a letter even moderately easy, a woman must be either greatly wronged or greatly in love with another man. When she began to write Mrs. Martin was fully convinced that she possessed both these requisites. Clever, charming and thoroughly spoiled, from her motherless childhood through two years of a childless marriage, she had early learned to blame anyone rather than herself if life failed to meet her brightest expectations. Existence was monotonous—then her marriage was a failure. She was unhappy—her husband must be at fault. Mr. Martin was not fond of poetry—blinded by passion, she had blundered into marriage with a man whose tastes and interests were beneath her.

The situation is not uncommon; given time and the absence of temptation, it may right itself, but she was given neither the one nor the other. With the first weakening of her inward loyalty toward her husband, there appeared a man who so evidently possessed the graces which her husband lacked that she forgot to notice that he as evidently lacked the virtues which her husband possessed. They dallied along the path of a sentimental friendship, meeting first at teas, which he frequented only to protest his detestation of them, and later, and more often, at her own house.

Mr. Martin, after meeting him once, always departed for the club at the

sound of his voice in the hall—a procedure that Mrs. Martin outwardly deplored.

"I don't see why you won't ever wait and see Ted," she complained, one evening, as he was slipping on his coat preparatory to departure. "He's so very congenial to me; in fact, our dispositions are almost identical."

Her husband nodded.

"As a woman, Alice, you're a dream," he said. "As a man, you'd be a tame cat. I don't like cats myself," and he gently set down the fluffy Angora kitten that was climbing up his trouser-leg. Ted, coming later, petted the kitten and read Shelley, with interludes in which he and Mrs. Martin exclaimed over the remarkable similarity of their tastes.

If Ted Langham had been merely "a tame cat" the friendship would have run its course and vanished into nothingness. Unfortunately, he was possessed of a few masculine ideas, which, instigated by persistent and increasing gossip, suddenly rose up and declared him to be desperately, hopelessly in love with Mrs. Martin. The awful secret remained his two days, at the end of which time he confided it, with remorse and self-condemnation, to Mrs. Martin—who listened. When a married woman listens to another man's love-making, the result is easy to prophesy, provided the man be persistent. From self-reproaches Ted went to regrets, and from regrets to affinities; and the step from discovering that two people are affinities to proving that they ought, therefore, to disregard all the laws of God and man, is not such a stride when taken in the path of sentimentalism. One of Ted's numerous wild-cat investments turned out well, they set the day for elopement, and it was on the eve of the day set that Mrs. Martin turned from her letter of farewell to meditation.

The meditation seemed at last to amount to something, for she rose, turned down the lights, settled herself comfortably on a sofa just out of range of the firelight, and said, rather tremulously:

"Oh, Dick!"

"Yes?" said her husband, not looking up from his paper.

"I—I got a letter from a girl to-day that I—I want to ask your advice about." Mrs. Martin's voice was not so entirely under control as is fitting for the voice of an unusual woman about to enter on an unusual course of action; but her husband apparently noticed nothing, laying down his paper with the regretful air of the man who has left the stock market unread.

"I'm afraid my advice won't do in women's mixes," he said, "but go ahead and we'll see."

There was a pause. Mrs. Martin hesitated, drew a long breath and made the plunge.

"You see, she's married. You don't mind my not telling you her name?" she added, mentally applauding herself for the subterfuge.

"Rather you didn't," answered her husband. "What about her? She's unhappy, I suppose, or she wouldn't have written you about things."

"Very unhappy," said Mrs. Martin, feebly. "Very, very unhappy," she added, more strenuously, feeling that the occasion demanded the emphasis.

There was another pause. Mrs. Martin's mind, instead of applying itself to the matter in hand, persistently harked back to the days when she first met Dick, and he had told her she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. She tried to shiver at the recollection of his bluntness, and was struggling to compare it unfavorably with Ted's way of quoting, "If you were what the rose is," when her husband's voice brought her back from the conventional past to the unusual present.

"Is that all?" he asked, patiently.

"Of course not," said his wife, more energetically. "She's wretched, and her husband and she are utterly uncongenial, so she's going to leave him—and she wants my advice about it."

"I see," said Mr. Martin. "Husband's a brute, I suppose," he added, tentatively.

"Well, not precisely a brute, you know, but impossible—you know the kind."

Mrs. Martin gestured vaguely with a hand that trembled in spite of herself. Noting that her husband's eyes were on the gesture, she regretted it, but consoled herself with the thought that he was utterly unobservant—an idea which she had so long assumed to be true that she never questioned it.

"Knocks her up against the furniture, does he?" queried Mr. Martin, pushing his chair slowly back out of the firelight into the half-darkness.

"Oh, no!" Mrs. Martin's tone implied that this would have been a trifle.

"Drinks, then?"

"No—no, he's all right those ways. He's simply uncongenial. They made a mistake, and she thinks they'd be better apart."

"Oh," said Mr. Martin, quietly; "so there's another man in it! Did she tell you that, too?"

"She told me all," answered Mrs. Martin, with dignity, adding, hastily, "all about it," as she saw a faint smile on her husband's face.

He nodded assent, stroking his chin in a way that meant he was seriously troubled. Even the clerks in his office knew that sign, but it conveyed nothing to his wife.

"What were you going to advise her?" he asked at last.

"I thought," answered his wife, "that I should advise her to leave him. It's such a mockery, marriage under such conditions," she added. The argument was one of Ted's, and had impressed her. "It's so much more noble to brave the world and be free than to live a slave to its opinions."

"Well, I'm not so sure," said her husband, meditatively.

Mrs. Martin gasped.

"Oh, of course," she said, hastily, "I didn't expect you to agree with me about it."

She had risen on her elbow in her interest, but she sank back again into the couch corner, and her husband

watched fondly the little curls and tendrils of her hair as an enterprising gleam of firelight touched them.

"I think most men would not agree with you," he said, slowly. "It's women—nice women—who talk about braving the world's opinions. Men don't believe in it much. They know too much about it. It's too hard work, Alice."

He paused, but his wife made no reply, and after a moment he went on. "Now, of course, if this girl's husband were a brute to her, or didn't support her, or anything like that, she could leave him and get a divorce in regular order. I'm not for divorces myself, though that's a matter of taste. But if she leaves him and runs off with another man, the world isn't going to say that she's braving it. It's going to say that she fell in love with one man when she was married to another. And the world doesn't think much of that sort of woman."

"Who cares for what the world thinks?" said his wife, defiantly.

"That's what you women say, again," said her husband. "But do you realize what it means to a nice woman?—that the people she likes won't speak to her; that her friends must be among a set of people who really are what she is only called; and that she's thrown away everything but love for a man who didn't have love enough to keep her from doing wrong. Love isn't everything, Alice. Now, that's the world's point of view," he added, in a lower tone. "Then there's the other. Have you thought, when you're advising her to do this, of the man she's leaving?"

Mrs. Martin moved restlessly. Something in his voice reminded her of the old days, when they were first married, and she had failed to notice their uncongeniality. Life had been easy then, and now it was very complicated—and she was very tired. Her eyes filled with tears, and she buried her face in the pillows of the sofa, while her husband's voice went on, quietly:

"It's rather rough on him, you

know. He isn't really a bad sort, I judge. Very likely he realizes, too, that he isn't 'congenial.' He's probably devoted to her; thinks all day at the office how, if this deal goes through, there'll be more money for her to enjoy; hurries home from the car at night so that he can dress for dinner, because that pleases her and makes her a little more satisfied with him. It's probably a sort of heaven to him just to have her in the room. Men are that way, you know."

His voice fell into silence. Mrs. Martin lay very still. He hadn't forgotten what it used to be, then? She tried to think of Ted and his arguments, but all she could hear was her husband's voice, as it sounded when he had first said he loved her, in the days when they had been so very happy.

"What you're proposing means this to him, Alice," he said, more steadily, after the pause. "It means that he comes home some night thinking of her all the way—comes in and she isn't home; but then she probably hasn't taken pains to be home early every evening lately. Then somewhere, on his pincushion, perhaps, when he goes to dress, there's a note that says it has all been a mistake, and she's gone off with a man who understands her. And he has to think of the years that have meant a bit of heaven to him as being only 'a mistake' for her; he has to face that cruel thought by himself while the servants are getting the dinner ready.

"After that there's the divorce court, and he has to help ruin the reputation of the woman he loves, so that she may patch things up a little by marrying the brute that tempted her.

"And when it's all over, he'll lock up the house that held his bit of

heaven, and he'll live mostly at the club, and wonder, day after day, if the other man makes her happy, and hope he does, and wish, night after night, that he could first kill the other man and then himself. And the worst of it all, for him, is that if he'd never married her she might always have been good. That's his side of it, Alice."

Mrs. Martin lay on the sofa, with her face buried in the pillows. There was a long silence, broken at last by her husband's crossing the room to stand beside her.

"Don't you think, dear," he said, gently, "that perhaps she made a mistake in thinking it's a mistake? A man's not so good as a woman thinks him at first, but he's usually better than she thinks when she's worried. Very likely he loves her as—as I do you—" he choked a little—"and, dear, though I don't say much about it, perhaps life without you would be a thousand times worse than what I've said. For I do love you, Alice."

Mrs. Martin hesitated, struggled one last moment for the unusual thing, and achieved it.

"The letter I've begun is on the desk, Dick," she said. "Will you put it in the fire, please?"

Dick groped his way through the dusk to where the half-finished letter lay, picked it up and committed it to the flames, face downward. As he stood flicking the burnt paper to pieces with the poker, his wife propped herself on one elbow and regarded him critically.

"You always were a dear, Dick," she said, "but I never knew you could talk so well."

"Oh," said he, without turning, "it's all in your Browning, somewhere, I believe. Only this ends better."

A HEBREW PROVERB

NOTHING succeeds like failure.

LADY STAR'S APOTHEOSIS

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

When half-gods go,
The gods arrive.

—Emerson.

SHE had fanned his senses, flattered his vanity, fired his imagination, touched his heart. He was drowned. He loved her with that romantic adoration which all women crave and so few inspire. His emotion was full of unexpected enthusiasms, born of the ardors of his clean youth.

"My dear little Dick," she used to say, looking up at him wonderingly, "you are simply immense."

She had kept some Americanisms with which to amuse the inhabitants of her adopted country, but her manners, her dress and her intonation were English. Only by the initiated and observing could any differences be traced. There is a certain English stolidity that no American woman, however long she may reside in England, ever acquires. Whether the fact be due to native idiosyncrasy of manner or weakness of nerves, it is nevertheless true that American women reveal by their faces and their general outline something, difficult to define, that betrays their nationality. No woman of forty-five has ever entirely escaped the impress of suffering. There are those who add, "the evidence of battle." These indications, oddly enough, are rarely missed in the countenances of American women who have married in England and created for themselves there any sort of social environment.

Lady Star—the nickname given her by her husband had always clung to her; her real name was Stella—had

not escaped the insignia of conflict. She was still handsome, but she looked hard. Now that she was one of the most conspicuous women in England, if not the most conspicuous, she still bore, like the much-buffed though skilful pilot, the traces on brow and lip of perils passed. Of this she herself was probably perfectly aware; in fact, she had few illusions, and her delightful frankness in acknowledging her limitations was one of her chief charms. To say vaguely that a woman is successful may mean much or little, according to opinion, for what some persons call fame, others shriek out is only vulgar notoriety. Lady Star, who was assuredly clever, had always noticed that the shriekers, although loud and venomous in their attacks on modish and prominent persons, were secretly ravished when these persons asked them to dine.

Although Lady Star dabbled in politics and played at literature, she early discovered that the only thing for which she was ever really envied was her experience of three days once as the favored guest of a royal lady. She had laughed at this experience in her sleeve, but she had never forgotten it. It was after this triumph that her friends more than ever loudly deplored—the press took up their wail—that she was the daughter of a stage-driver and a cook. "Only think!" they cried, "how wonderful that she should be invited by the Princess!"

She was, in fact, the daughter of refined and educated parents, but in the general execution of American ancestors, which runs riot in Europe, she dismissed the detail with praise-worthy *insouciance*. She was too

much occupied to apply for heraldic distinction. Being full of humor, when the cook story first found vent she said to a regal gentleman: "I hope dear mamma was a *good* cook"—and it was after this that she was bidden to the palace.

Her father had made a large fortune, which he eventually lost. It was in the years of his prosperity that she became Lady Monteagle. With her father's ruin, and subsequent death, her income ceased. Of Lord Monteagle it may be said that, if his disappointment was bitter to him, he did not vent it on his young wife. He was a gentleman. His family, however, made noble amends for his leniency. Their spite knew no bounds; and had not Lady Monteagle been valiant, the torrent of their displeasure might have overwhelmed her. The Monteagles' early married life had been passed in hunting, shooting, dancing and flirting. He shot and she flirted. Now, faced with bankruptcy, they put their heads together—her dusky and his golden head—to "talk it over." The result was that she stopped flirting, and he gave up pheasants and foxes. He got for himself a Government appointment—a place in the Foreign Office. It is perhaps stretching a point to say *he* obtained it. Lady Star ran about among Members of Parliament, ambassadors, journalists and public men in general, imploring and cajoling, entreating and dissembling; in turn coquettish and *femme sérieuse*—employed, in fact, every stratagem of wit and wisdom with which Providence has provided her adroit sex.

There were those who said her methods were unscrupulous. One does not haggle over the quality of the rope that saves from drowning; one uses what one finds. Lady Star finally succeeded in wresting the desired benefice from unwilling opposition. Lord Monteagle made some wry faces, but went manfully to work. In six months he was conversant with his duties. In twelve he had become a power. She was pleased. His unexpected development of talent won

her regard. She became his devoted and faithful ally.

When he died, in view of the royal favor she had so deftly turned—wiser than many of her sisters—from masculine into feminine channels, her father-in-law made her an allowance. He was pushed to this by his wife, who had daughters to present and marry. This meagre maintenance, with some débris of her father's fallen fortune, kept her and her girl decently, if not comfortably.

Having fathomed the value of social prestige, Lady Star did not let her courage fail. The flag of distress she flew became a pennon of victory. Higher and higher she soared, until she was almost lost sight of by the tremulous emulators of her lofty flights.

It was at a country house party that she had put a crowning stroke of genius to her felicitous enterprises. The Duchess, her hostess, had helped her, it is true. She was one of the women who liked Lady Star. Many disliked her cordially. These did not grow any fonder when, on this memorable visit, she captured for her particular girl—who was only seventeen and not yet "out"—the heir to an earldom. It may be said that the girl was exceptionally beautiful. It was to rest from this exploit, and after her daughter's marriage, that she took a tiny villa at Tresserve, to be out of the whirl of life for a while and get her ideas and her digestion in order before the next campaign that might await her. A few cold *douches* at Aix would no doubt improve her health and her complexion.

The King of Greece was at Marlioz, and there were a few English and Americans at Aix-les-Bains. She did not care for the residents of the villas, and the ambulant French were principally provincial. She dined His Majesty, whom she had met in London, mingled with a few English whom she deemed worthy of the distinction, and snubbed all her own compatriots robustly. She voted them bores. She explained that she had entirely done with America. On

the whole, she lived very quietly, harboring her forces for future service.

There was one Yankee, however, whom she did not snub. That was Dick. At the Petit Port one day he had saved the life of her dog, and her gratitude found vent in a smile that bowled Dick over as completely as it is possible for a fellow to be—bowled. From that moment he was her servant.

At first he gave her that timid homage which is not without piquancy to a woman accustomed to bolder methods. Star's men friends were not troubled with timidities, nor given to chivalrous impulses, and their ardors—when they had ardors—were eminently positive and practical. She had had many love affairs, principally with Englishmen. She thought the Latins a waste of powder, and one of her rules of warfare was that the ammunition must be kept dry. Most of these affairs had left a bad taste in her mouth. They had probably lent their aid to the tracing of fine lines about her eyes and to the droop, when in repose, of her firm lips. This droop, these lines, only awoke in Dick Spence a more absorbing and wilder worship. He would have liked to smooth them away with reverent kisses; he would have liked to spill his life-blood for the "spoiled beauty," as he called her. Star knew that she had, with all her luck, been anything but *gâtée*.

"You little goose," she used to say to him, "Englishmen never spoil their women; it is we who are their humble slaves. That is why, if I ever marry again, I sha'n't take a middle-aged, gouty, British brute, but a nice little American boy." This was accompanied by one of those glances from her great brown eyes which robbed him of speech and of reason.

He did not believe her. He was not a New England lad for nothing. He could be cool and self-controlled with others, and even with her he did not entirely forget those lessons of prudence instilled by his Puritan traditions. Yet when she spoke to

him thus in her large, rich voice, he felt himself to be dying with delight.

Long read about in newspapers, long fed on by his imagination, the great lady *par excellence* of his boyish dreams, it seemed incredible to him that suddenly he should be thrown into her intimacy—made a part of her daily existence. For so he became. That he should be fascinated was a matter of course. He was only twenty-three years old, on his first trip to the Continent, and fresh from college and his New Hampshire town. That she should find pleasure in his society was the marvel. It was the riddle he could not unravel.

"We're awfully chummy, aren't we, little Dick?" she used to say to him. And sometimes she would just touch his ear or his cheek with her beautiful hand. "Eh, Dick?"

And the hot blood would rise to his cheek and forehead, and Star would laugh and say:

"You're a *nice* boy, you know, Dicky. I *like* you."

The cabmen began to know them when they went out for endless drives, for which Spence always paid.

"I'm so hard up, so beastly poor!" she used to say. "And this year I have got to give Claribel five hundred pounds."

The boatmen waited for them on bright afternoons at the lake that Lamartine has sung in the noblest of his meditations. The girl at the chalet near the *établissement* knew madame liked her *pain grillé* very brown, and that monsieur took lemon in his tea. The pair had reached that sort of interesting publicity which Lady Star liked, and which her slave accepted as an unpleasant adjunct of his vassalage. She had lived too long before the footlights to court obscurity. He stumbled blindly after her, the jars to his taste palliated by the intoxicating flattery of her confidence.

Sometimes they tossed francs together at *petits chevaux*, or lingered amid the hungry-eyed crowd at baccarat.

One night a woman of the half-world, under her crown of yellow

hair, in a wide black hat and a very low-necked bodice, a woman whom princes had covered with jewels and who had roused the ire of a queen, spoke to Dick as he stood beside her by the green baize under the glaring lights.

"Give me five louis," she said, "and I'll play them for you. I am *veinarde* to-night."

"*Faites votre jeu, messieurs et mesdames,*" shouted the pale *croupier*.

"*Rien ne va plus,*" echoed his *vis-à-vis*, raking in the *jetons*.

Dick gave her the money. She dropped it into her bosom and turned on her heel.

"You will know where to find the change, *mon petit,*" she cried to him over her shoulder, with a little catlike grin of her carmine lips.

"You got sold that time," said Lady Star, a trifle irritably. "When are you going for your change?"

Dick flushed angrily.

"Do you ask me that, Lady Montea-
gle? This is no place for you. It is pollution for you to breathe this air." She, his idol, near to this thief and harlot!

It was then that she had said to him, "You're simply immense, you know, Dicky."

He led her away. And this sense that he cared for her, that he guarded her as if she were a pure, shy girl, sent a pang of pleasure through the lonely woman's heart. Far, far from kin, always among strangers, secretly conscious of their ill-concealed malevolence and enmity, Star had indeed learned to live alone. She had kept her own counsel and asked for no quarter.

Now she stepped out with him into the starry night.

"Take my arm," he said. "And what an imprudent girl you are! You're not clad half warmly enough. Let me cover you up."

Lovingly, tenderly, he drew about her shoulders her light coat. She stood very quietly, letting him thus minister to her; fastening with agitated fingers the golden clasp under her full white throat. It was like her

figure, somewhat thickened. But in the starlight, in her white cloth gown and scarlet hat, she looked very brilliant, and even young. She was as tall as Spence, if not taller; and as she leaned toward him her blown hair sometimes brushed his cheek.

"So, little Dick, you don't go and see *ces demoiselles*?" He turned his eyes to hers, and in their mute affection, which was like that of some dumb creature, she read her rebuke. A violent blush she could not have explained rose to her brow. With a coquettish movement she pressed lightly for a moment the arm on which she leaned.

"Forgive me, Dick," she said, softly. "I had forgotten how to respect one of your sex."

Men are rarely grateful for such expressions; and Spence was a man, in spite of his principles. He felt awkward under his aureole of saintship. "Where there is no temptation," he said, drily, "there is no credit. Those poor women are hideous to me."

"Why, Dick," said Lady Montea-
gle, persisting, "how severe you are! Patte Blanche is considered stunning."

"Is that her name?" he said, laughing. "I pity her. I pity them all profoundly."

"Do you pity me, Dick?" She stopped.

The houses began to grow scarce here, where the road abruptly leaves the avenue to ascend the Côte de Tresserve.

"We will walk home," she had said to him. "It is so cool and fresh, after the hot Casino and that nasty crowd at the Villa des Fleurs."

"Why should I pity you?" he said—"Lady Montea-
gle—Lady Star—Star?"

Under her trust in him and her constant comradery his timidity was waning. It had given place to an ardent, petting devotion, which Star was beginning to beg for, so dear had it become. Then, as he again turned toward her, he saw that she was weeping. Such an unlooked-for demonstration in this gay and daring

creature shook him with uncontrollable emotion.

"Oh, Lady Star, Lady Star, why do you cry?—you, so wonderful, so powerful, so beautiful!" and a moisture that he tried, ashamed, to hide rose to his own eyes. They were not big or bright, Dick's eyes, but they were full of honesty and kindness. Something in his expression, as he gazed at her, filled her with compunction.

"Don't love me so much, little Dick," she said, dabbing at her tears with her handkerchief. "Don't. It hurts. I am not worthy."

"Give me your tears," he said, huskily. "Let me drink them; they belong to me. Give others your smiles."

Foolish words, uttered, no doubt, often before by other lovers on other Summer nights, but somehow balm to her sore and tired spirit.

In the long, long walks they had together it must be acknowledged the pathetic element was rarely uppermost. Complaints there had been in plenty; but they had been principally rebellion at the leanness of credit and the inflation of debit. She had talked to him freely about her financial straits, the costliness of her child's outfit, the sacrifices she had been called upon to make, the horrid makeshifts of a woman of fashion without ample means. She had told him of the shameful conduct of her "in-laws," as she called them, at the time of her father's death, of the mean and covert slights they had put upon her in her hour of need and humiliation, of their fulsome flatteries as soon as they discovered her influence in high places.

"The beasts!" she said. "And to think I am almost dependent on them to-day!"

Once, when she dwelt on her difficulties in raising the petty sum that she wished to put into her daughter's *corbeille*, "I couldn't let her go absolutely without one cent," she cried. Spence, much moved, exclaimed:

"Oh, Lady Monteagle, I have so much more than I spend; my father gives me all I want. Next year I am to go into his firm. Bachelors have

few expenses. Why won't you let me, a man who would gladly die for you, give—or at least advance, if that word wounds your heart—the little sum you need—any sum you need?" he stammered. "You know what it would mean to me!"

She made no exclamation; she contented herself with looking at him narrowly; then abruptly gave him her hand.

"Little Dick," she said, "I promise you this: If I absolutely can't scratch up that money, I'll think of your offer."

He grasped her hand eagerly. "I thank you," he said, very low, "for your great generosity."

"Dick," she said to him, two days later, "if you don't know what to do with your money, why don't you get more clothes?"

"Am I shabby?" he asked, anxiously.

"No-o—" said Lady Monteagle, "not exactly shabby; but I don't care very much for your clothes."

In his town he had been considered extravagant and elegant, and he winced a little at her words.

"The Yankees don't waste much money on their backs, Dick—the men, I mean. They do themselves injustice. They are not ugly. I think there's a good-looking set of boys coming on, and you're one of them."

She saw he was wounded, and this amends was the needed consolation.

"I'll write to a London tailor at once," he said, smiling; "send him my measure, and see what he can do for me, so that at least you may not be ashamed to be seen in my company." He was still smarting, but determined to carry off his pain gaily.

"I'm glad to see you're not too peppery. In England Americans are considered touchy. I don't think they are. If they were they would all have died off the face of Great Britain long ago—simply been exterminated. For, *entre nous*, Dicky, they hate us. When I first came over I was sensitive. Every slight I got, every kick and shove, I resented as if they had been

the lash of a whip. But by-and-by I learned that sensibilities don't count, that one must bite back to get on top, or at least be good-natured. People stop striking us if we don't squirm. Because, you see, it stops being entertaining, and the British like to be amused."

They walked on for a while in silence. Her cynicism caused him acute suffering, just as her whimsical and joyous humors filled him with pleasure. In an hour she could make him pass through every stage of mental excitement. Is it their wisdom or their folly that makes men grateful to a woman for such experience?

To-night, as they slowly traversed the mile and a half that separates Aix-les-Bains from Tresserve, he noticed that Lady Monteagle was in an unusually soft mood. Was it the effect of the touch of the calming night, whose wind played with her hair and swept across their faces? Certainly nothing could be more delicious than its breath. Perfumed with cyclamen, that rosy violet of Savoie—she wore some he had given her in her bosom—the delicate and subtle breezes rocked and lulled their hearts. Savoie! whose children perish far from her loved mountains, or are devoured by that nostalgia which brings them back, world-weary, to end their days in peace upon her hills. Savoie! whose princes for eight centuries reigned unmolested, owning their sovereignty to that proud Humbert of the Blanches Mains, Comte de Maurienne, whose last descendant was Victor Emmanuel. Savoie! Old Sabaudia—*sap walt*—forest of pines, delicious garden, verdant prairie! What strange glaciers, impetuous torrents, dark and fantastic gorges and dreamy lakes, with their enchanted shores! The beauty of earth and sky, indeed, are here!

Even Lady Star, who was not romantic, seemed to feel the evening's beauty, for she stopped talking of expenses and began to chatter of her love affairs. They had reached the small white villa, "La Turquoise," with its blue-green blinds glinting

through the platane trees, whose shade almost concealed it from the road. Her little dog, Friquet, barked and then came out and jumped up at Spence, licking the hand that had once saved him. Dogs remember benefits.

They stopped to rest on a stone seat, a gray exedra built in the wall, over which trailed a veil of ivy. She had taken off her hat and he was fanning her with his.

"It seems so extraordinary to me," he was saying, "how a woman like you, more talked of, sought after and adored than any other woman now alive—we will pardon a lover's exaggeration—"should have such a sorry opinion of men and life, and speak as if they had failed her. Who has had success, if not you, Lady Star?"

"My successes! *Parlez-en!* Why, don't you see, Dicky, dear, that the only thing in the world it was really worth while for me to accomplish I have missed?"

"And what was that?" asked Dick, ingenuously.

"Don't you see, you dear, darling boy, that I ought to have married money?"

"You had only to put out your hand," said Dick, gallantly, yet stifling a sigh that arose from some jealous pang. "Surely every fortune of England and America was at your disposition."

It was such a relief to speak the truth; to bare her soul; to pour into those willing, tender ears all the discomfures, all the distresses, of her dazzling destiny. Such a comfort to be—herself. For, under all, Star was sincere. And above all, she gauged, as no one else could, her powers and their failures.

"Don't you believe it, Dicky. I was forty when Mont died—my husband. Men of forty don't want wives of forty. I am inclined to think that from forty-five to sixty what they want is mistresses. They don't like responsibilities. They have generally survived a tiresome wife or two, and are just snuffing the

green pastures. Stall-fed animals like the green pastures, you know. If they do want to marry it is some very young girl. When they came round I noticed they generally made love to Claribel—the dirty brutes! Middle-aged men are odious! They have wicked, wicked minds. There was one widower who played at love with me. He used to squeeze my hand under the table at the Duchess of Exborough's. I begged her to have a transparent slide put in. While he held my paw he used to expatiate—above board—on the angelic virtues of his departed spouse. She must have needed them all! He even told me he had put it in his will that he desired to be buried in the same grave. Just then he gave my hand such a crunch that one of my rings broke. It stuck in my flesh, and I burst into tears. The Duchess told him, across the candlesticks, he mustn't talk to me on such sad subjects.

"Then there was Lord Brook. He is immensely rich. He paid me hot court; he was always after me. He raked my poor old bones all over his great house—a *triste* palace he has patched up—a lot of antiquities tacked on to a modern background. He trotted me about his grounds and gardens, his conservatories and stables, till my back ached and my eyes were sore. He has what is called acquisitiveness, Dicky. His bedroom is full of the broken bric-à-brac he saved from his mother's town-house fire. He exhibits it with pride. He sent me one bonbonnière. It was so hideous I gave it to my maid. My visit there cost me twenty pounds. I make out no bill for lacerated feelings. And when he had dangled all his splendors before my starved eyes he told me he should never marry, as he thought marriage was too cut-and-dried; but that if—he grew quite lyric, Dicky—two souls that beat as one, *et cetera*. A chain that should be no chain. . . . Why stoop to low conventionalities? . . . I looked at his swollen lips, at his bleared eyes. . . . How I loathed him! He actually had the indecency to suppose

some woman was going to love him for himself! Really, Dick, you know, it was *funny*! I am sure my visage must have been a study! Yet this man is called fit; women cower before him because he frightens them to silence through fear of his calumnies—and what calumnies! He pries into their pitiful, shabby little secrets, knows what their incomes are, and, if they make any sort of show, shakes his head and has 'surmises,' smirchy and vile. Yet they might starve at his door and he would not help them.

"*Au fond*, Dick, some men hate all women. All such, at least, as do not appeal to their senses. Yet, oddly enough, they bitterly resent that any other man should like them better—in a better way. It is a sort of jealousy. Those men are always recounting to one another the tricks their sex has played on women, and chuckling that the latter have 'got left.'"

"It is all too horrible!" cried Spence, "too horrible! You, who ought to be surrounded by every refinement of speech, every daintiness of thought, every fine and exquisite thing!—you, so fastidious, to be subjected to such infamy! . . ."

"There remain the very old men," continued Lady Star, reflectively, not noticing his tragic interruption. "They are better. For one thing, they don't see very well. When one first begins to employ art, Dicky, one does it skilfully. But later, when one's own eyes give out, one puts it on more thickly. They can't see us very well, you see, unless we do make up a bit. We look dim to them. They generally think us beautiful, poor dears, and they sometimes love us. They are, at any rate, kinder. And then—they die, which is always a dignified thing to do. No, at forty-five a woman must marry a very old man, or a lad about your age, Dick." He trembled with pleasure. "Youth has still some virtue; age has humility; the middle-aged men are pigs, and prefer their wallowing."

"Why do you go with such people?" said Dick, helplessly. "Why

don't you trample them to dust—a goddess like you?"

She smiled.

"Ah, little Dick, do you think I could go home and live in your town, and attend strawberry festivals, and play on the organ on Sunday, and eat doughnuts at your tea parties?—cackle with professors' wives about higher education, and attend lectures at the town hall on woman suffrage? Tell me, Dicky, could I?"

"We are not quite so bad as that," he said, nettled. "Come and see us! You will be surprised at our luxuries, and you will at least be free from indignity and insult."

"No, Dick, the die is cast. There's no looking back. That sort of thing is very nice, no doubt, but it doesn't make us even with our enemies."

"But surely you have no enemies to conquer! Your place is made—secure. You have only to be."

"Dicky, dear, don't be a donkey! Everyone who's worth a copper has enemies. And it's fight and fight all the livelong time, or they get ahead of you. You see there are new women coming up all the time. Men are such snobs! It's only the smart ones they look at! Beauty and wit don't amount to much if a woman isn't smart; and if you think you can be smart and lie down you'd better try it."

Some lemonade she had called for arrived, and they sipped it under the boughs.

She felt such a *détente*, after all this expansion, that she became unutterably charming.

He walked back presently, tossed by conflicting sentiments, disturbed and troubled, but withal happy, with that transcendent happiness of a first and an exalted attachment.

Oh, to smooth away her sorrows! To soothe and succor her! For, whatever was left of sweetness in her coarser nature the delicacy of his had gauged.

II

"Piggot," said Lady Monteagle to her maid, while the latter loosened

her rough, thick hair, "Mr. Spence thinks I look twenty-five. At this present moment I look to myself sixty-seven."

"You carry your years well, madam," said Piggot, evasively.

"Piggot, do you believe that angel doesn't suspect I *do* my hair?"

"If you'd get it done reg'lar, madam, there's none sly enough to catch sight of the gray locks. But you're indolent, madam."

"Indolent!" Lady Star laughed. "That's the best compliment I've had this year. That boy's lollipops are nothing to it. So, Pigg, you think me lazy?—I, who've never rested for one hour since I was seventeen and pinned on my wedding togs."

"It's only the blondes that gets suspected, madam," went on Piggot, who always exhausted one subject before leaping to another, and who followed her mistress's jerky phrases with ponderous difficulty. "Everybody knows they does it. A lady's cleverer to keep to her own color."

"It's a fact," said Lady Monteagle; "the old Earl, Piggot, swallowed my hair, and I saw him examining the cracks in Claribel's."

After a silence, during which Lady Monteagle shook herself out of her lace *peignoir* and Piggot assisted her into a bath robe: "There ain't no doubt, madam, as that young gentleman just dotes on you."

"What makes you say that, Pigg?"

"Every look of his proves his adoration, my lady."

"And what do you think of him, Piggot?"

"He's got a nice-looking, fresh face, madam."

"He's got such odd little yellow eyes, Piggot, just like Friquet's."

"There's a kind, honest gaze out of them, then, my lady."

"So there is, Piggot," and Star sighed.

"There's them as is more elegant as hasn't got his manners."

"So ho, Mistress Piggot, you're spoony on him yourself!"

"You're always for your jokes, my lady; but when I sees a 'eart I recog-

nizes it, and Mr. Spence 'as got a bigger one than many as flaunts titles and riches."

"You're getting quite lyric, Piggot. And pray, what am I to do with his—heart?"

"Them that loves best gets trampled on," said Piggot, gloomily, in reminiscence of an early and unfortunate experience.

"Dear me!" said Lady Monteagle. "Is my bath ready? How dismal you're getting all of a sudden."

"I was sentimental in my youth, madam, and I got hit for my pains."

Piggot's h's were of that unexpected sort on which one can never depend. They sometimes struck the mark, although they generally fell short of it.

"How does my skin look?" asked Lady Monteagle, anxiously.

"You're not as yellow as you was, ma'am. The *douches* is doing their work."

"Your flatteries will turn my head, Piggot!"

"You told me, my lady, when you engaged me I was always to speak the truth."

"That's a fact, so I did. Most women don't want it. They say their maids' commendations help to settle their nerves and clear up their complexions. But after my mother died I said to myself, 'I must have a woman who won't lie to me, or I'll make the fright of myself some of my friends do.'"

"You'll never be a fright, madam. You're a beautiful lady," said Piggot, encouragingly. "And through your white veils, ma'am, and in the evening, you looks thirty."

With this tempered praise in her ears, Lady Monteagle went to her warm tub.

Through the soft evening air that he clove as if with wings Richard Spence was descending the hill. He had stopped and loitered in the moonlight. It environed him like a silver sea. It lay upon the roofs of the old houses that clustered in the valley below. The tall treetops shimmered above him, their leaves already brown-

ing in the first chills of the approaching Autumn. They seemed to hug each other, as if thus to resist the cold breath of the long nights. From the ruts of the road and the hollows of the ploughshares, where the water of recent showers lay, rose a pale vapor. The Diana of the Villa Emilia, lonely in her niche of the stone wall, seemed to smile at him ironically as he passed. A moment more, and he had swung himself into the avenue that leads from Aix-les-Bains into Marlioz. The memory of the evening was in the young man's blood, the hope of the morrow in his pulses.

They had made many excursions together in the long, languid days of the swiftly waning season. They had sat side by side on the tiny steamer that sails through the hidden gorges of Sierroz. The boat advances timidly on the white waters between the twin ranges of rocks that overhang the torrent. In the obscurity they had gazed upward through the network of branches at the few patches of flickering light. Then they had rested together near the Cascade de Grésy, where a queen has raised a monument to her unhappy maid of honor:

Madame la Baronne de Broc, agée de vingt-cinq ans. "O, vous qui visitez ces lieux, n'avances qu'avec précaution sur ces abîmes; songez à ceux qui vous aiment."

They had floated on the moonlit lake. They had visited the Abbaye of Hautecombe, where are engraved the escutcheons of the great house of Savoie: *De gueules à la croix d'argent.*

They had read on the stones the names of Amédée, the Comte Rouge, of Phillibert le Chasseur, of D'Aymon le Pacifique and of fair Yolande de Montferrat, his wife; had seen the graves of the young Princesses Agnès and Beatrix, Marguerite and Sybille of Savoie. They had climbed from the public garden up in the *crémaillère* to the magnificent plateau of Mont Revard, and wondered who the tenant might have been of the forsaken Châlet Bleu. They had driven through splen-

did solitudes to the sombre heights of the Grande Châtreuse.

Now there was still the Col de Chat to explore. Lady Star had promised him to be ready at noon the following day, to accompany him on this airy pilgrimage. He could remember nothing else than that he would be with her. He trembled at the thought of helping her with hand and arm through winding, steep, vertiginous paths, where, far from men and prying eyes, they would be together and alone. Sufficient unto the hour was his rapture.

III

THEY reached the Hotel of the Col at three o'clock. Lady Monteagle exclaimed she was thirsty, and before they started on their further scramble she would have a cup of tea.

It was served to them in a rose garden under a wide umbrella planted in guise of a tent. It was really good and hot, she said, and she nibbled at a *Madeleine*, while Spence sipped a glass of *Seyssel* and smoked a cigarette. On the balcony some couples and a family of French *bourgeois*, presumably silk manufacturers of Lyons, were indulging in champagne and sirup and water.

"Why do they all gaze at us so?" asked Lady Monteagle of Spence. A showily dressed girl, large busted and narrow hiped, was amusing herself dipping bits of cake in the froth of her wine and passing them on to a somewhat embarrassed Englishman as if he were a pet dog, who sucked them with an expression of combined *mauvaise honte* and ravishment. Presently she adjusted her *lorignon* and closely examined Lady Monteagle and her companion. The mother of the family, too, was interested. She and her eldest daughter were taking notes of Lady Star's hat and frock.

"What relation, little Dick, do you suppose they take us to be? They fancy me, no doubt, a retired *cocotte*, and you——"

"They think nothing of the sort," said Dick, who had learned to ward

off the reckless speeches with which she delighted to offend his prejudices.

"They are certain you are my son——"

Spence laughed. "No son ever stared at his mamma as I do at you. They take you, depend on it, for just what you are and they are not—a great lady to the tips of your pretty pink finger nails."

She was growing to value his opinion of her; and it was because of this she tried to shock him. "It would be too asinine," she said to herself, "for me to care."

She said now: "Thank you, Dicky. You know how to make nice speeches. I assure you I am unaccustomed to them. My set doesn't flatter."

She did indeed look extremely distinguished in her dark blue serge and the small toque that fitted closely her proud and graceful head. At her breast she wore a great bunch of cyclamen.

"You were born to be flattered."

"I don't know about that, Dicky, dear. I've ceased to mind any knocks, except those that hurt my looks. We get too perverted to have resentments. They interfere with attainment. Dear me, what long words I'm getting to use; it's the influence of your academics."

"Why do you paint yourself so dark?"

"You see, Dick, I'd rather you'd not find me out for yourself. I once found out another's meanness. I was never forgiven."

"You speak a deep truth there," he said, seriously. "People don't forgive us their own baseness. But in you there is no pettiness. Only sometimes desponding opinions, which discourage, and therefore are unworthy of you."

"The *haut prince* had a custom that he loved not fish, and because he was served with fish, the which he hated, therefore he was not merry"—I am quoting, Dicky, from Sir Thomas Mallory. Perhaps you don't know that I once wrote two stories of the age of chivalry. I had to pore over that old fellow to get them up. Such

a bore! I don't believe you ever heard of them. The publisher said I was a genius. He then gave me ten pounds for the two. It did not seem dazzling. No one I knew ever read them. But three strangers wrote me they thought my soul and theirs were twins. The three letters were so exactly alike I wondered if, perhaps, the same man had written them all."

Dick did not ask her to send him her stories. She thought this rather stupid of him. Dick was very young and had much to learn.

"You belong to the sort of people, Dicky, who refuse to see life as it is and live only in dreams. You don't like fish, and you're cross when you get it."

"Leave me my dreams," said Spence, hotly, "since they do you no hurt, and make me happy."

"Are you happy near me, little Dick?" Her voice suddenly became soft and low.

His muteness was the best of answers. "An awkward lover, but a guileless one," she thought to herself.

"Come!" she cried, springing to her feet, as if to shake off a lethal languor that wrapped them in its warm breath. "Here we are discussing abstruse subjects—entirely out of my line—while the sun is growing hotter and hotter and making me squint, and we ought to be up there on the mountain, where a heavenly breeze is blowing, and then get home before it's quite black."

As she rose, a thin, yellow-faced woman in a shabby cloak and a ruched cap came up the path between the flower-beds. She carried a tattered paper box under her arm.

"What an apparition!" said Spence.

"What can the old scrag want of us?" said Lady Star.

"*Bon jour, belle dame!*" The old woman stepped under their gay umbrella. There was a smell of dampness and mouldiness about her. She opened her *carton* and exhibited some colored veils. Ladies sometimes forgot or lost theirs when coming up the mountains. She walked once or twice a Summer from Du Bourget to the

Col. She had a debt to pay. She was alone. "At my age," she whimpered, in her cracked staccato, "there's not much else that I can do."

"Does she mean," said Lady Star, "that she walked all the way?"

"It looks like it," said Spence.

"Here, woman, give me that purple one." Lady Star pulled out a bit of bright pansy gauze from the pile.

"Dicky, you can pay," she said, pinning it about her hat, "and I'll refund when we get home. You sha'n't be out of pocket for my philanthropies."

With mumbled gratitude the vender began to tie up her wares.

"Do you like tea?" asked Lady Star, and gave her a warm cup. "And cakes?"

"*Un petit verre de vin,*" said the old woman, "would warm my stomach better." She laughed, showing long, dark teeth between her faded lips.

"Here goes!" said Spence, filling his glass. "*Trinquons!*" She drank both the tea and the wine, and ate all the *gâteaux*.

"The poor creature was hungry," said Lady Star. "Fancy!"

As they walked up the road Spence said to her: "You can't imagine how like you were, you and the crone, O lady mine, to a picture I once saw of Beauty and Death hobnobbing. It was gruesome!"

"Whew!" said Lady Star. "Death throttles beauty, and this veil is stifling, like all our best actions. Take it, Dick, and put it in your pocket, and never dun me for it," and she tore it from off her hat.

Soon they had left the wide path and entered the prairie. Polybius, the historian, tells us it was over the Chat that Hannibal penetrated, in the year 534 of Rome's foundation. In 1859 the French artillery crossed this mountain to the war in Italy. The etymology of its name doubtless springs from Caturiges, the earliest inhabitants of the *pays*. To reach the summit one must skirt the Lac de Chevelu, thence to La Vacherie, after which begins the more difficult ascent.

They heard voices below them. A party was probably starting.

"Lady Treherne told me," said Lady Star, peering ahead, "that there were two paths, and one much easier than the other. She said to turn to the right instead of to the left, at a broken pine tree under a boulder. Last year she passed two weeks at the Col, and knew every crevasse. Hallo, here are the very landmarks!"

"I think we had better go the regular way," said Dick. "Take my hand."

"Of course, Dick, you're always for the 'regular way.' Conservative! I'm going this way, and I don't want your hand."

He didn't approve, but yielded to her, as usual. Catching at shrubs and dwarf trees, they began their climb. Her refusal of his assistance cost her something. She would have liked the thrill of his warm touch, she would have liked to lean for support on the young man's powerful arm. But she felt an unexplained desire to surprise him with her agility. Soon, in fact, she was tired and breathless. Her gown felt tight; she became flushed. Yet she doggedly declined his assistance. Just in front of her, light as a leopard, he sprang from ledge to ledge; she following, a little painfully. "He sha'n't think me an old thing!" she thought, with her undying pluck.

The path they had taken became more and more indistinct.

"We ought to have kept to the other!" cried Dick, turning to her. But she only laughed. She intended to be mistress of every situation. This youth from New Hampshire must not believe himself necessary to her. If it were true he was conservative, she knew that to be impulsive with conservative persons is to put them on their guard. But by-and-by even her courage failed.

"One needs wings!" she cried, faintly. "Stop a moment! I will—" The words had not left her when she tottered, her foot caught in a trailing vine, she swayed for an instant, screamed, threw up her arms to him,

then fell heavily down—down—into the depths.

He stood petrified with his horror.

How he got to her he could never have told. Hanging to bushes, blinded with dust, torn, bleeding, he finally reached her.

She had fallen on her back. She lay on a platform, or ledge of stone, quite still.

"Oh, my God!" said Dick, sinking to his knees beside her. Her face had escaped. It was not bruised. From under her neck oozed a slow stream of blood. One arm was bent under her. Her eyes gleamed dark and terrible.

"Little Dick," she said, "it's all over with me. My back's broken."

"Oh, my God!" said Dick.

He staggered up and gave wild shouts for help. "Help! Oh, God!"

The wind waved the dry grasses. The sky was of steel. The sunlight shot like streaks of harsh copper across her stony couch.

"Dick!" She spoke with effort, but he could hear her. "Don't—don't leave me! Come to me—I am . . . alone!"

He knelt again.

"If you could raise me!"

He tried. Her shriek rang through the ravines like a dying eagle's. It fainted into space. Her head rolled back on his shoulder. He knew then that her spine was crushed.

"If you would let me leave you, only a moment. Darling! darling! a little while . . . I will tear myself—kill myself. Could you bear it a half-hour? Less than an hour—less! I would climb up, then come back to you—help!—a physician!" He was incoherent in his great agony.

"If you leave me to die alone I will drag myself to the edge and end it. . . ."

He soothed her with gentle words. "There, there, darling! I won't leave you. Oh, my God! . . ."

"Dicky, can you sing?"

He tried to smile. "Not very well, dearest."

"Dicky, do you know that hymn,

"Jesus, My Saviour, Look on Me?"
Mamma used to sing it to us. Sing it, Dick!"

"Yes, I know the first verse."
And he sang it to her, over and over and over, her hand groping in his breast.

She seemed sinking into stupor. He did not think she could see him any more.

"Dicky," she said, "lean low! lean low!"

He put his ear close to her mouth.

"I am a sinner. . . . I have sinned more than you know. You are good. . . . Say you forgive it—say you forgive it! Kiss me, Dicky!"

He bent to her. "I love you!"

"Kiss me! You were so sweet! . . . I hated them! . . . I—loved——"

His dry lips met her humid ones, on which rained his tears.

A half-hour later her hand crisped on his breast.

He covered her face, rigid in its loveliness, with the old woman's purple pall. Yes, its loveliness! For death, albeit violent, treated her well. It respected her womanhood. It laid its silent touch gently on her, so that she need not fear her lover's scrutiny. It swept away the years, and left on her no trace of life save its youth and its dream.

Perhaps Dick Spence had guessed in her that force some men and women possess of rising to occasion. Per-

haps he knew that when Lady Star had been directly called to acts of heroism or renunciation she had met them with nobility. Such acts are not loved by the world. They are not envied. They do not elevate in the social scale or fill the purse. And that is why they are often said by the thoughtless to have "dragged down." So they do! So they do! But such dragging down may find sublimer critics. Perhaps Lady Star was better than her life.

It was twenty-eight hours afterward when the convoy returned to the hotel. The alarm had been sounded, and the search had been severe. Men, lowered with ropes, had found Lady Star—at last—and the man crouching at her side. Her pale body had been swung up from its eerie resting place, and then brought back to the haunts of men.

A physician held Spence by the arm.

He waved away the crowding people of the inn, curious and awestruck, when the solemn procession paused. Dick was mouthing, smiling, whispering to himself, wringing his fingers; his eyes had a furtive look, as if of fear.

"There has been a pressure on the brain," said the doctor, gravely. "It is a nervous type. He seems quite harmless. These mild cases are sometimes obstinate; but—he is young. We must send for his friends."



MASKS

IN some stray nook of long neglected places,
Whence all the memory of ourselves had fled,
Dear, if perchance our smiling, pictured faces,
Found, faint and faded, after we were dead,

Should cause those who an idle moment tarried

To wonder what our lives and loves and ways—

Think you they'd guess your sad smile gladness carried,

Or that my gay one hid unhappy days?

CHARLOTTE BECKER.

VALENTINE SONG

OH, a song for the Winter waning,
 When the birds begin to pair,
 And their soft complaining
 Wafts on the Southern air;
 When the evetides grow less eerie
 With the chill East's whelp-like whine!—
 Oh, a rouse for his saintship cheery,
 Good old Saint Valentine!

Oh, a song for the pulse that's beating
 Under the iron earth;
 For the speedy meeting
 Of melody and mirth;
 For the rout of that cruel Tartar,
 Winter, of mood malign!—
 Oh, a rouse for the merry martyr,
 Good old Saint Valentine!

Oh, a song for all fond lovers
 Dreaming the olden dream;
 For the gleam that hovers
 The radiant rainbow-beam;
 For the love that is no fable,
 The love that is thine and mine!—
 Oh, a rouse for sweetheart Mabel
 And for good Saint Valentine!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



SHE WAS REASSURED

TEDDY—Won't you come and see our new baby?
 OLD MAID TEACHER—Yes, dear, when your mamma is better.
 TEDDY—Oh, but it ain't catching!



NO ROOM FOR DOUBT

MISS FITTE—Is he an author of distinction?
 DEWITTE—Well, they say he's out of debt.

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THE TRAVERS FAMILY GHOST

By Douglas Dunne

TWENTY-EIGHT years ago, on the fifteenth of January, the night that Bob Travers was born, was the first authentic occasion on which the Travers family ghost was actually seen, although it had been in the family for over a century, and was supposed to take a stroll through the great corridor of the Travers house on all state occasions, such as weddings and funerals and on the eve of Christmas and New Year's.

The Traverses had always been rather proud of their ghost, for ghosts are rare, even in the best New York families. There is no denying that the supernatural race is often fastidious in choosing its haunts.

No one had ever really seen the ghost, except Mike, the old lodge-keeper, who had grown gray in the Travers service. Mike had seen the ghost distinctly on the night that Mr. Bob, now head of the house of Travers, was born. It is quite true that Mrs. Mike, who, on that night, had been a maid in the same house, frequently hinted that the general rejoicing attending the birth of an heir to the Travers estate had affected Mike's mental vision as well as his heart, for it was on that night that he had proposed for her hand. She spoke of the two happenings as absent-minded freaks, following deep libations.

Bob's birthday, from the time that he was a golden-haired little lad, with candles on his cake, had always been celebrated with a party, and at the yawning hour of midnight it was the custom to bring Mike up from the lodge, in all the glory of his best

clothes, as a guest of honor. The old man was seated in the most comfortable chair before the blazing logs, and, after a generous bumper of champagne, was wont to relate, in the choicest Milesian accents, the story of the ghost that had walked on the night Master Bob was born.

And now Bob, who at college had not been known as "Bob" but as "Goat" Travers, had attained the double dignity of husband and papa-hood, and there was Mrs. Bob, who had been the prettiest girl and the belle of New Haven, where many a wake over her memory had been held at Moriarity's by the other fellows, from whom Bob had carried her off in the meteor-like fashion that had distinguished all his performances during his university course.

The heart of a college man is always in a somewhat battered condition. The trouble is chronic. Varian, Jr., who happened to be engaged to Miss Winthrop at the time Travers ran away with her, was especially hard hit. She had appeared to care a lot for Varian, Jr., when one afternoon "Goat" Travers met her at a tea, and—biff! as the boys said, it was all over.

It was then that Varian, Jr., began to develop a distinctly bloodthirsty tendency. He found himself picturing her as Bob's widow. An abnormal imagination was the peculiar form that his crushed affections assumed. He knew that Bob's mode of life did not promise any pronounced longevity, and he counted on the day when Bob should be under the daisies and he might feel free to demand of Mrs. Bob an accounting for her inconsiderate elopement. Of course,

he didn't wish Bob dead. He simply dramatized the situation and waited. And when some of the stories of Bob's escapades subsequent to his marriage got about, even into the newspapers, he set his teeth more doggedly than ever, and wished that she would send him some word, so that he might go to her and save her from what seemed like a future of unending misery. Varian, Jr., did not stop to think exactly as to the right or the wrong of the matter; he thought only of her, and he had some chivalrous sixteenth-century notions lurking under the violent English waistcoats he wore.

How oddly things happen in life! When, after three years' waiting, the message came from her it was like this:

THE TOWERS,
WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK.

MY DEAR JACK:

Bob is going to celebrate his birthday on the fifteenth, and is asking all the men that were in the class. We both hope you will come. The Travers ghost is supposed to walk on that night, which ought to be great fun.

Sincerely,

ELEANOR TRAVERS.

Varian, Jr., pondered over this note and reflected that the frivolous tone was probably assumed. Between the lines he read a hundred things. She might wish his advice. Perhaps he might be able to help her in some way. By such meditations he appeased his conscience. In reality, he had wanted to see her again ever since. And he decided, as men always do in such cases, to go, which was precisely what he should not have done.

She met him at the station and drove him over. They talked innocuously and pleasantly of old times. Once he turned and looked at her, and noticed how tired-looking her eyes were above her sables. He clenched his hand under the carriage robe, and Mrs. Bob gave a little scream that almost made the coachman look round. Her hand had somehow got into Varian's and was reposing there.

He apologized, and after that kept his eyes sternly fixed on the middle seam in the man's back.

On their arrival they lost each other, as people do at house parties. It was in the hallway after dinner when he found himself beside her again. The place was lighted only by the flaming logs, and Mike was in the big chair telling the story of the ghost.

Westchester house parties are marked by their unconventionality, and this one was no exception to the rule. The guests were all young people, and the evening had almost developed into a romp. The guests had risen between the courses of the dinner and danced impromptu twosteps and waltzes in time to a banjo band, while the eyes of the men had grown bold and the women's tender from the amount of champagne consumed. In a corner, under a palm, Bob Travers was flirting desperately, furiously, with Cora Desmond, a pretty widow. No one appeared to notice, but a pale young man with arms folded was observing the little scene as if it were a play. His old dreams had begun to make him miserably happy once more. Nellie's white shoulder gleamed against his black coat and the perfume of her hair drifted across him like a memory from the past.

"An' thin," went on Mike, "*the moon cum in the big winda' beyon' the sthairs, an' I see somethin' comin' slo-o-w down the hall, like it was a dead one walkin' in its slape—*"

"I'm going in the morning, Nell," whispered Varian; "I want to see you for just a moment—somewhere—alone—something important that concerns—"

"Sh-h—" she said; "it is impossible."

"—*wavin' its hands and moanin' like a banshee,*" went on the old man. "*I was that frightened me tath knocked together, and thin—*"

"Do you intend to go on like this?—to let him treat you openly with such disrespect—when I—"

"Hush! they'll notice you!"

"But I *must* see you; just for a minute. Say in the corridor at the

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foot of the stairs, when they're all gone. I'll be there. Don't fail me, Nell, and I'll forgive you everything."

"—I fell on me knees prayin', and the thing cum within two feet o' me, it did. And thin, with another sickenin' groan, it vanished doon the hall—"

There was uproarious applause and more champagne when Mike finished his tale, and after some parting songs the guests separated with oft-repeated farewells, for some of the men were to leave on the morning trains.

An hour later Nell Travers crept along the corridor to the great oaken settee where Varian, Jr., waited. What he said would make an old story. Everything that he should not have spoken came to his lips as the two stood there in the gray light of the morning. He was to leave on the eight o'clock train. A steamer sailed on the following day. He recounted all the indignities that she had suffered from her husband's neglect, his unblushing flirtation of the evening, and painted an impossibly beautiful future somewhere, anywhere—men are not apt to be accurate in their geography on occasions like this. And Nell Travers, weeping miserably at his devotion, could only whisper: "But the baby, Jack—I couldn't leave the baby."

And all the while this interesting scene was progressing Bob Travers and Mrs. Desmond crouched guiltily beyond the stairs leading to the picture gallery, and waited for it all to end. But it did not end until Travers, with an oath, suddenly stepped out before the two.

Varian turned like a man expecting and prepared for a blow, his shoulders squared and his hands clenched. Instinctively he stepped before Nell Travers, who stood as if turned to

stone, and as he did so he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Desmond's spangled scarlet train beyond the balustrade. Mrs. Bob reeled suddenly, with a hysterical sob, and her husband caught her in his arms.

"Varian," he said, "you've been drinking. I believe you go on the eight o'clock train?"

In another moment a number of sleepy guests and servants hurried into the hallway, inquiring about the commotion. Luckily, the grayish blue of morning made the turning on of the lights unnecessary, for the faces of the principals in that early morning episode would have told a tale.

As it was, Bob carried his wife down the hall, apologizing to his disturbed guests. "That ghost story upset Mrs. Travers's nerves," he said. "She actually thought she saw the spook!" And the guests, seeing Mrs. Bob coming out of her faint, dispersed once more, laughing nervously.

Later on, when Mrs. Bob's maid had left her, her husband appeared at the door of her room, his now thoroughly sobered face white as death. He looked at her with a half-smile, as if she had taken on a new interest and value to him.

"I suppose I ought to kill him," he said, "but the fact is, he's perfectly right. I've acted like a cad to you!"

Then, with a sudden memory of Varian's tempestuous wooing, and with a grim smile still upon his lips, he turned the key in the door leading to the hall from Mrs. Bob's room and slipped it into his pocket.

"Good-night!" he said, shortly, and then stepped through the curtained doorway into a room beyond, where a little golden head turned on a pillow sleepily, and a baby voice said: "Is 'at 'oo, pop? Is it mornin'?"



NEWS TO HER

HE—Miss Elderly made me wait for an answer.
SHE—I didn't know she stuttered.

THE ROSE'S AVATAR

THERE grew a rose more wonderful
 Than ever Saadi sang,
 Its loveliness occult and strange,
 A rapture and a pang.

Its petals had the pulsing touch
 That shakes the blood with fire;
 Its warm deeps were the avatar
 Of unassuaged desire.

Hid scents and hushed seraglio dreams
 Were in its subtle breath,
 The madness of the Mænad's joy,
 The tenderness of death.

Its soul was all the mystic East,
 Its heart was all the South—
 Till tears and love transmuted it
 To the dark rose of your mouth.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.



IT SOUNDED FAVORABLE

SHE—Has the widow given you any encouragement?
 HE—She asked me if I snored in my sleep.



RETROSPECTION

THERE is more joy in loving when
 The loving has gone by;
 We miss the moment's laughter in
 A reminiscent sigh.

A fairer maid may dwell at hand—
 Across the way or nearer—
 But the little girl we *used to know*
 Seems just a trifle dearer.

CARLTON TAYLOR ELLBURY.

THE FIRST VICTIM OF REFORM

By Lloyd Osbourne

SHE looked at him with curiosity not unmixed with a certain fine contempt; sooner or later she knew she was bound to meet him, and now that at last the occasion had arrived, she felt the shiver of an uncomfortable excitement.

Not that Jack Kingsmill was a very formidable foe to look at. Indeed, he was almost a disappointment to Mrs. Mark Farrant as she took his measure with her blue eyes and remembered her self-appointed mission of reform. He was not at all the handsome, dashing, irresistible creature who had so often been described to her by her friends; that wrecker of human hearts whose days were passed in the undoing of pretty women, and whose character for evil was a by-word. So this was the man! Forty years old, if a day, iron-gray hair, iron-gray mustache; teeth so faultless and white that she was at first inclined to think them false; figure tall, almost thin, broad at the shoulders, straight as an arrow; a face that would have been downright ugly were it not redeemed by intelligence, humor and vivacity.

"So you are the one they call 'Darling Jack Kingsmill?'" she said, smiling up at him. "'Fascinating Jack Kingsmill,' 'Conscienceless Jack Kingsmill'—the man I've been looking for a hundred times this week."

"I cannot well help what they call me, you know," he said. "I see that I have been socially assassinated, so far as you are concerned. Call me a lady-killer at once, and hang me."

"I am not judging you by the nickname alone," she said. "Whenever

conversation lags in Newport, people with one accord talk about *you*."

"Worse and worse," he said. "I can see in your eyes the harm it has done me. I suppose you think I am a regular desperado; that I would kidnap your French maid, or put knockout drops in your afternoon tea. You will be more charitable when you have lived among us longer; a little backbiting makes us wondrous kind. You ought to hear what they already call *you*!"

"What can they say about me?" she exclaimed.

Kingsmill hesitated, and studied his immaculate toes.

"They say you are the prettiest little busybody and mischief-maker in Newport," he answered. "They say that when Mark Farrant gave you his hand and millions, and his place in society, that he unwittingly took a viper to his bosom—a viper that means to reform us root and branch, and make us—if the shock doesn't kill us—all over again as good as new. Mark, they say, is already a reformed character; that the forty feet round Mark is a better and cleaner forty feet than the rest of the world put together. They say age will give no exemption; we shall be told to be good, or die. It is even hinted that some of us shall not be granted the option, but shall be lined up against a wall, like communists, and summarily shot. In all of the throng here to-day, I doubt if there is a man but is trembling in his varnished boots and wondering if he is good enough to pass the fatal muster. I myself, outwardly so calm, am palpitating with memories of my misspent

youth and notorious middle age. Oh, Mrs. Farrant, try and spare me!"

"I am told you never spared anyone yourself," she answered, coldly; "whether it was your friend's wife or some poor girl whose only crime was to like you too well."

"My dear lady!" cried Kingsmill, aghast, "let me entreat you not to say things like that. In society we say such things in whispers; we don't blurt them out aloud to the sinner himself. It is—excuse me—horribly rude; it's embarrassing; the sinner, even if he is innocent, does not know where to look."

"You say 'in society,'" said Mrs. Farrant. "But, Mr. Kingsmill, I am above society. By my marriage with Mark I have become, in spite of myself—how shall I express it?—one of the most conspicuous women in America. I must, of necessity, be a leader or be nothing. My influence will be felt in the mysterious, dim way such influence *is* felt, by those I shall not even see or know. I can do harm or good to whole generations. An extraordinary number of people—people who thus give the keynote to those about them—will determine everything by the simple formula: 'Mrs. Mark Farrant does it; Mrs. Mark Farrant does not do it.' Do you wonder that I take myself a bit seriously?—that I look at society through different eyes from most women?—that I should have ideas, hopes, aspirations of acquitting myself well, and doing something more than simply accept the conventional rôle?"

"You are an untitled princess," said Kingsmill. "I don't require anybody to tell me that, or to explain the tremendous power I know so well you possess. And most of us are in your hands for better or for worse—socially, I mean—and it lies with you to promote or degrade any one of us courtiers at will."

"That's why I have been eager to see you," she said, "though I hardly hoped to get a tête-à-tête with you to-day at this garden party. The fact is, Mr. Kingsmill, I wish to speak to you very frankly and privately."

Kingsmill bowed.

She fully thought he would smile and pull his mustache; he did neither, only looked down at her with grave deference.

He was certainly well bred, even if he were marked out as the first victim of reform.

"Let me tell you," she went on. "You are one of the first people I mean to crush out; there isn't room in all society for you and me, Mr. Kingsmill. You are—why should I mince the words?—too immoral, too dissolute, too old and hardened for any mercy. In fact, I mean to cut you dead, and I don't want any misunderstanding about the reason why."

"You are frank, indeed," he observed. "Might I ask you specifically what I have done?"

"What have you *not* done, I wonder?" she returned. "You are—to put it broadly—a flirt and a libertine, a hanger-on of rich women, a professional beau with as much your price as any painted creature of the streets. If I am to count for anything in society—and I mean, if I can, to count for a great deal—men like you will have to go."

"You are too innocent to know how much you are insulting me," he said at last. "You abuse your woman's privilege; were you a man I should answer such insinuations with a blow. Does it not occur to you that even a reformer ought to have some concern for justice? If you launch Mark in this business, I tell you, with a frankness equal to your own, that he'll run the risk of being—well, something exceedingly disagreeable. Not that Mark is capable of such a thing; Mark is a gentleman."

"Oh, you are all gentlemen, I know," she said, tartly. "You do everything in a well-bred way, whether it's the ruin of a married woman or the corruption of a silly girl. That is what makes me hate you most—your fine air, your fine manners, your perfect innocence in your badness."

"I am sorry, I am awfully sorry, you should think so ill of me!" he said. "For my part, I liked you the

moment I saw you; I admired you down to the ground; you are a great deal more than pretty and *chic* and charming. I said to myself, 'By Jove! Mark's married a woman that will *do*!'"

"I see why they call you 'Darling Jack Kingsmill,'" said Mrs. Farrant, with a little ripple of derision. "But if you only knew how badly you do it!"

"You said you meant to crush me," he returned. "You certainly seem to know how."

"Oh, a man like you is no novelty to me," she said. "In my part of the world they don't wear such good clothes and don't have the *entrée* to such good houses. They stand at street corners and make audible remarks about the women that pass, and lead the same busy, profitable lives that you do here."

"Your hatred for me is almost flattering," said Kingsmill. "Nobody before ever disliked me so much in ten minutes; all my previous enmities have been a matter of years, like the growth of oaks. But why, in the name of all the gods, Mrs. Farrant, do you pitch on me as the scapegoat of society? I am not a whit worse than the others; in the bottom of my heart I believe I am heaps better; I am just one of the mob, when all's said. I can understand a nice woman's contempt for the whole lot of us, but I resent being singled out as the one black sheep. Every one of us is a black sheep. Even old Mark wasn't such a saint himself."

"You will please leave Mark out of the conversation," said Mrs. Farrant.

"Even a worm will turn, you know," said Kingsmill. "One has to choose what weapons one can. I had a friend—why should I disguise the fact it was myself—who nearly killed a burglar with an umbrella. You imply you are reforming Mark—there was a time when he needed a great deal of reform—and you seem to think badly of me because I have nobody to take *me* in hand."

"I am going to drive you out of

society," said Mrs. Farrant, "and all men like you."

"Reform us off the face of the earth," observed Kingsmill. "Don't you waste a thought on what is to become of us?"

"Oh, you can go to the devil by another road," said Mrs. Farrant. "Doubtless you'll find plenty of women you have already sent there, to keep you company."

"Such is the charity of the good and pure!" said Kingsmill. "Such is reform everywhere! We sinners go down on our knees in the dirt, and you regenerators ride over us waving your hats. It is so satisfactory, so exhilarating—for the regenerators. But what about the under dog, Mrs. Farrant?"

"I think a little chloroform on a sponge is what I'd give the under dog," she answered. "I don't want him to suffer; I only want him out of the way."

"Now see here, Mrs. Farrant," said Kingsmill. "Suppose—mind, I only say suppose—that I were to tell you that you are, on the whole, quite right; that I agree with you in everything you have said; that you are only expressing and putting into practice what I have often thought myself. What would you have me do, then?"

"I should judge it the rankest hypocrisy," said Mrs. Farrant; "just another proof of your detestable adroitness. I should like you even less than I do now."

"But suppose," he persisted, "you really knew me to be sincere; that it was the real thing, you know—as real as Mark's."

"The assumption is incredible," said Mrs. Farrant, "but for the sake of argument, and to show you that I have a logical mind, I will accept it. I should tell you to marry some nice, sweet girl, and live your life for her alone."

"Oh, you women!" cried Kingsmill. "So, after a life that has been disreputable enough, within the limits of the game, you would have me conclude with an infamy! I tell you hon-

estly there have been occasions when I have been tempted to do just that thing. I say 'tempted,' because the idea is horrible to me. I may be bad, but I am not as bad as that."

"That's what women are for, though," said Mrs. Farrant. "We have to be good enough for two, pure enough for two, and unselfish enough for two. You all come to us, in time, with your battered old hearts, and warm yourselves at our sacred fire. There is always a snug harbor for the very worst of you."

"Meaning me, I suppose," said Kingsmill. "There doesn't seem room for this mariner in yours."

"Mark sailed in before you, you see," said Mrs. Farrant. "Besides, with all his faults, Mark is worth fifty of you. He has been weak, I know, and silly and fast, but he has the redeeming spark. Mark's fault is his fatal acceptance of everything that offers. He is just as willing to play all morning with a child as he is to play baccarat all night; there is something almost pathetic in his desire to please. You and Mark are poles apart. You are cold and selfish and calculating; you make a business of pleasure; you are as methodical in evil as a clerk in a bank; you are capable of dictating love letters to a typewriter and keeping press copies for reference. You are now what Mark might have become if he had played the game for fifteen years longer."

"Those fifteen years!" ejaculated Kingsmill. "I begin to see what constitutes my crime."

"It's the way you have spent them," said Mrs. Farrant.

"Dear lady," said Kingsmill, "were I to say I like you, I fear I should sink even lower in your esteem. Yet I do like you. There is even a certain piquancy in the situation—an implied compliment in my supposititious wickedness. I thrill with a sense of injured innocence; I almost glory in being so much misjudged. I see—if I choose to follow it up—that there is a career for black sheep of which I never even dreamed. You have wit, intuition and

a wonderful knack of hitting the right nail with your little hammer. You have a voice that is delightful to listen to. I ought to strike back, and yet I find myself turning the other cheek; I ought to explain, expostulate, deny—and all I do is to look into your eyes. You say the most abominable things; you offend me at every word; you fill me with a resentment I see only one way of satisfying—to make you like me. Oh, Mrs. Farrant, is it too late for me to try?"

"It is too late," said Mrs. Farrant. "Fifteen years too late."

"You mean to crush me, after all?" exclaimed Kingsmill.

Mrs. Farrant nodded her graceful head.

"Will you let me say something that sounds a bit conceited?" he observed at last.

"With pleasure," she answered.

"Well, then, you are the first woman I ever met who really hated me."

"I don't hate you," she said. "I can't help disapproving of you, that's all. Everybody draws the line at certain women; I mean to go further and close my doors to certain men. You are not the only one, I assure you."

"So I must go!" he said. "You must admit that, with all my faults, I have the temper of an angel."

"I should disapprove of you less," she went on, "if you would fight a little harder for my good opinion. But you are fatally acquiescent."

"Your good opinion!" he repeated. "How can a man fight when the case is already settled? It's like arguing before a judge who you know has been got at by the other side. You are only waiting for a decent interval, and then you'll put on the black cap and hang me."

"The right sort of man fights to the finish," she said. "A thoroughbred goes till he drops."

"But I am not the right sort of man, it seems," he exclaimed. "That is the root of the whole matter."

"I dare say you were once," said Mrs. Farrant. "Even now, old and stale as you are, I see why women let themselves care for you. If I didn't

see things with such clear eyes I should be tempted to like you myself. There is—why should I not admit it?—something winning and gallant and disarming about you; your manner is calculated to a hair's-breadth to suit the person you wish to please; you are a professional fascinator. I confess you do the part very well. I admire you as I admire a conjurer whirling plates. One says to one's self, 'Good heavens! What practice, what dexterity!' and as for the patter—isn't that the word?—who could do it better?"

There was a rustle in the trees overhead; a sudden flutter of some nesting bird; a scattering of twigs and leaves. Mrs. Farrant uttered a little scream as she felt something trembling and clinging against her face. She palpitated in an ecstasy of disgust, while Kingsmill, swift to save her, disentangled what proved to be nothing worse than a tiny earwig. The man's strong, sinewy hand lay for a moment against the damask of her cheek, and communicated in that second of contact a thrill of sex—a strange, unsuspected lawless revelation of physical accord. She dared not thank him; she did not even look at him; her cheek burned with her shame.

"You are an enigma," he said at last. "Is it possible you are the counterpart of my ignoble self?"

"You must think me an awful little fool!" she said.

"No, I don't," said Kingsmill. "Strange as it may sound, I am rather in sympathy with you. I can understand exactly how I must impress such a woman as you, ardent and good and clever and young. Honestly, I believe a little reformation would do us no harm. Of course, I am bad. We are all bad, we oldsters; we are all corrupt; we hardly know the meaning of sincerity. When you are my age, and when you have lived our life, you, too, will be bad and heartless and worldly. It surprises me to think how many good qualities I have managed to retain almost in spite of myself. I am neither a drunkard nor a gambler. I am less a liar than the

most of us; I am not a mischief-maker, a toady or a coward."

"Altogether, you have a rather good opinion of 'Darling Jack Kingsmill,'" said Mrs. Farrant.

"I am forty-four years old," said Kingsmill. "It would be strange, indeed, if I did not know myself pretty well by this time. I am humble—God knows how humble! I can never expect to please women in the way I once did. I take the crusts that are thrown to me, and I am thankful. You see me, in the midst of the whirl, to all appearances an elderly Lothario throwing handkerchiefs. The children of light always put the worst construction on everything; they detect evil in every glance, in every touch of the hand; they go back to their pure homes and tell one another the horrors they have seen. We are told we shall be cut dead to-morrow, ostracized, crushed. Yet I believe you would be amazed to know what a decent fellow I am. I give to the poor; I go to church on Sunday; I love freshness and youth and gaiety, and as I miss them more and more in myself I seek them all the more in others. The only person with whom I find it a bore to be alone is myself. If you took a vote of all the pretty women in society, I believe I should be unanimously returned the most popular man. Do you think I won such a position by doing nothing? I never presume; I have no rights; the old dog knows his place. You can flirt with me for an hour, and then, at the merest hint, I will efface myself. I am always ready to make room for the next. I am never morose or troublesome. It all makes women feel so safe with me; they trust me much more than they do their lovers; they permit me an astonishing intimacy, half contemptuous, half affectionate. And heavens! how they make use of me! I recover compromising letters; I lend them money; I redeem, with all secrecy, their diamond tiaras; I disentangle erring husbands and bring them back repentant; I take cads by the collar and bump them into doing the right thing.

If your distinguished foreigner gets tipsy at your ball I am on hand to save a scandal and hustle him into a cab; I dance with all your wall-flowers; I take your country cousins to the Horse Show; if you tell me to, I will black your boots or wash your dog. What is there, indeed, I don't do? And then you must remember how dull most of them are—these people in society. They have money, but, dear God, so little else! They itch to be gay, but they don't know how to do it. It falls on my shoulders to make things move, to manage their great effects, to drill them for their conspicuous parts on the great stage. And they are owlishly grateful. The men try to give me blocks of American Leather or Consolidated Lard, with the pretense of having invested a nickel for me in Wall Street; the women's eyes positively shine when they look at me. The first, I am rich enough to do without; the second, I confess, is what I live for."

"And that is your life!" exclaimed Mrs. Farrant.

"You despise me more than ever," said Kingsmill.

"No," returned Mrs. Farrant. "I begin to feel the least bit sorry. It seems so little worth while—so much striving for nothing—such ashes in the mouth, when all is done. You appear to me like a man who has been starving all his life, contenting himself with husks, when there is bread on every side. One woman's warm heart would be a better possession than all this contemptuous popularity."

"You forget I am forty-four years old," he said. "Those warm hearts beat for younger men!"

"That is a detestable untruth," she cried. "You are too pitiless a looker-on to believe such a thing for a moment. At the risk of giving you a false impression, I will tell you—"

"What, dear Mrs. Farrant?" he asked, as she hesitated.

"But I cannot say it," she cried. "I can lecture you, but when it comes to admissions, I dare not make them. Don't you know that you force me to

be a little more cruel than I should like?"

"You see, in fact, that you have misjudged me?" asked Kingsmill.

"I have, I confess," she said, "a little bit—so little, that the mere telling would exaggerate it. I still think the same of your conduct, and all that; I still disapprove of you as much as ever, but, in a way, I feel sorry for you. Don't you think it's rather unmanly to appeal to my sense of pity?"

"I am not defiant enough," he suggested. "I have shown you that I am a human being. Beauty has discovered that I am not really the Beast."

"But you *are*," she cried. "It is that which breaks my heart. You are worse even than I thought, only in a different way—in such a self-seeing way. Nothing would please me more than to admit having made a horrible mistake; I have none of the pride that cannot undo a wrong; I have a nature that is generous in atonement. Do you know, it would really make me happy if I could take your hand and say, Mr. Kingsmill, please forgive me!"

"And you cannot?" he said.

"The sad thing is that I am right," she answered. "You are all that I ever thought you—you are irreclaimable. In only one respect are you different from the first impression I had of you."

"Would you tell me what that is?" he said. "No," he added, as he saw her face change, "not if it's too disagreeable. I have listened to enough home truths, as it is. In the navy, in the old flogging days, they said there was a point at which every man would scream, no matter what his grit. I think I have about reached that point myself."

"I was not meaning to hurt you," she said, "not this time—"

"They used to rub in salt afterward," he said.

She gave a little shudder. "I don't like your choice of comparisons."

"You are a woman all over," he returned. "Physical pain shocks

you, and yet you never think twice about stabbing a man with your tongue."

"This wasn't a stab," she said. "I am not always a virago, though I don't blame you for thinking me one."

"What were you going to say, then?" asked Kingsmill.

"You have made so much of it that I cannot say it," she answered. "It would have an added value that I never intended."

"Please," he said. "Surely such an explanation is a sufficient safeguard."

"I was only going to say," went on Mrs. Farrant, "that you are one of the most charming men I have ever met. There! I have said it; I am just as bad as the rest."

"What do you mean by 'the rest'?" he demanded.

"Oh, the other women, you know," she answered. "Heaven knows there are plenty of them!"

Kingsmill did not look at her.

"Why don't you speak?" she cried at last. "You look as if I meant to cut you, after all."

"I believe you ought to," he said, gloomily. "Why, of course you ought to."

"May I not choose my own friends?" she returned, with spirit.

"Am I to count myself one of them?" he inquired.

"On a single condition," she returned. "If you belong to me, you belong to me altogether. It is all or nothing."

"I am yours, *sans phrase*," he said.

"After all your confessions," said Mrs. Farrant, "you must forgive me for feeling sceptical."

"I ought to have told you nothing," said Kingsmill.

"Then I should always have hated you," she said. "Do you remember that story of King Charles, when the groom was caught stealing corn? 'He has been at it two years,' said the King. 'Why did Your Majesty never deign to tell?' inquired the courtiers. 'The rogue took me into his confidence!' said Charles. You see, *mon ami*, you took me into yours."

"Mrs. Farrant," said Kingsmill, "don't you think you owe me something for your injustice, for the hard things you have said and thought of me? Some reparation for what has been to me a very bad quarter of an hour?"

"I don't know what more reparation I could give you," she answered. "It doesn't seem to me that you have come out of it badly."

"You permitted me to touch your cheek with my hand," said Kingsmill. "Won't you let me touch it with my lips?"

Mrs. Farrant widened the distance between them. Her eyes sparkled with surprise, disdain and anger; her bosom rose.

"You are impertinent!" she said. "I will ask you to take me back."

Kingsmill made no answer. He gazed at her moodily, and from her to the ground.

"I dare say I ought not to blame you over-much," she said at last.

"In your set, I suppose, all the men are cads and all the women *cocottes*."

Kingsmill still said nothing.

"You might, at least, apologize," she went on. "A real lady-killer ought to be prepared for such contingencies. No doubt you know exactly the right thing to say."

"I am ashamed," he answered. "I should only give fresh offense by dwelling on the provocation."

"As like as not," she burst out, passionately, "you have been betting money on this very thing. Somebody has challenged you to kiss me within the hour of our meeting; even now, perhaps, the umpire is waiting at your club."

Kingsmill raised his hand protestingly. His face winced. It pleased her to see how much she had hurt him.

"I never bet on a lady's favor in my life," he said. "I may have committed all the sins, but of that I am incapable. What a bounder you must think me! If you'd let me, I'd go down on my knees and kiss your feet; by God! I'd kiss the earth under them, if I thought such a thing could regain me what I have lost."

"Well, it wouldn't," said Mrs. Farrant, putting out her little foot and looking down at it. "I'd think less of the earth after you had kissed it; even in the time we have been together I feel as if you had somehow soiled and degraded me."

"Tell me what I can do?" entreated Kingsmill.

"There is only one thing you can do," answered Mrs. Farrant. "Give me your word of honor—if you know the meaning of such a term—that after this you will never speak to me again; that you will never even look at me again; that if I enter a room it will be a signal for you to leave it; that you will promise to avoid me, in future, as if I, too, were an elderly person of forty-four!"

"Anything else?" asked Kingsmill.

"Yes," returned Mrs. Farrant; "tell me honestly how you ever dared to think of kissing me—me—Mark's wife."

"You'd only hate me the more," he expostulated.

"Oh, no, Mr. Kingsmill," she said; "that would be impossible."

"I will tell you," he said, "tell you with the same extraordinary frankness I have shown toward you throughout. I don't know how it is, but I cannot pretend to you; you compel me to be sincere, in spite of myself. It has been to me a kind of day of judgment, and you are the recording angel. What did I wish to kiss you for, indeed! Because you are the most adorable creature I believe I ever saw; because you have an air, a grace, a way of smiling at a man with those blue eyes—"

"Oh, leave out the patter," said Mrs. Farrant, brutally.

"I am a fool," continued Kingsmill. "I have shown you, only too openly, I know, the sort of person I really am. A contemptible sort of person, I admit, pursuing a contemptible course with a certain assiduity and success. I am, as you once very aptly called me, a professional fascinator. I have made a business of pleasing pretty women, and, by taking incessant pains, I have

worked myself to an enviable position in the hearts of several hundred! I have never tried for the first place in any of them; I have had no concern with *grandes passions*, deceived husbands, and all that you suspect me of. I never hid in a cupboard in my life; it is twenty years since I wore a flower in my upper left-hand pocket. My inclination has always been for the third place, that of the confidant, the man friend, the old dog they all like to have about. To-day I met you; I liked you; I liked you even a little bit too well. You told me what you meant to do to me; you told me how I had been ear-marked, so to speak, for annihilation; that you meant, indeed—if you could manage it—to exclude me from society. I was piqued; I became frightened as my tricks failed, one by one, to please; I almost lost my head. But at last I began to win ground; I won a little more. Heavens, how I labored! You softened, you changed, you melted. In the madness of my success I thought to turn a hard-won battle into an utter rout. You must remember I have a certain pride in doing the thing well—the internal, unexpressed satisfaction of the good workman in a good job. I have a strong sense of professional spirit. To kiss you seemed the climax of the most trying day of my life; it seemed a vindication of my years and my grizzled hair; and I could then say to myself: 'Yes, I am old, but my hand has not lost its cunning.'"

"What earthly good would it do you?" she asked. "A kiss is nothing if it is given without passion, if it is extorted, like the *lira* you toss a beggar when he shows his stump. I am always kissing people; we are old-fashioned, you know, and in our family it is still the rule, like morning prayers and the way we fold our napkins. You have already won from me a great deal more than that. But the professional fascinator must needs put the conventional seal on his triumph. Really, Mr. Kingsmill, I gave you credit of being more subtle; but I see now that you cannot forego the

formalities of the game; you are actually distressed when it does not move with precision. And I have played into your hands by appearing to be insulted. I *was* insulted for the minute. A woman's first instinct is to cling to the conventional. It only occurred to me by degrees that I shouldn't care an iota whether you kissed me or not. Were it not that we might be seen I should permit you to kiss me here, in the perfectly cold, prosaic, businesslike manner I believe you like the best."

"People cannot see through yew hedges," said Kingsmill. "Besides, they are all too busy flirting with each other to waste a thought on us."

Mrs. Farrant stopped and cast a rapid glance about her. She was all pink, and she looked up at Kingsmill with captivating confusion.

"Quick!" she cried, softly, laying a rosy finger on her cheek.

She disengaged herself from his clasp. She was all in a tremble, and her breath came and went as she raised her hands to her loosened hair. Little by little she regained her composure.

"I said *one*," she whispered. "The next time, remember that the lips are not for people of the third place. I wonder if you are not the most conceited man in the world," she added. "I know I am the silliest woman."

"I don't know what I am," he returned. "I wish to God I had never seen you!"

"Take me back," she said. "No, no, not again, for anything! No!"

They turned down beside a wall, and taking a narrow path beneath the trees emerged at last on the open sward. In the distance a string band was playing amid a sea of bonnets and parasols; people were moving here

and there in little groups, the dark garb of the men contrasting with the fluttering brilliancy of the women; impatient youths were struggling about the refreshment pavilion and making off with plates and glasses to rejoin pretty consorts in shady corners; and everywhere animation, gaiety and laughter.

"Will you be at the Fremonts' ball to-night?" asked Mrs. Farrant below her breath, as she nodded and waved her hand to an acclaiming group. Kingsmill himself was bowing here and there, and even as he did so, his face took on another expression, that of the smiling actor before the footlights. In the perfection of his self-possession, Mrs. Farrant sought, with a momentary pang, for a sign that he was not, in a social sense, betraying and leaving her. Had he not said that he wanted no more of any woman than what she had already given him? Could it be that he was less exigent than herself?

"You will be there?" she repeated.

"Of course," he answered.

"I want you to be there," she said.

"I am only a beginner, after all."

"A word is enough—" said Kingsmill.

"And—"

"Yes?"

"I don't want you to belong to all those other women."

"Tell me what you want?"

"I want you all to myself."

"In what place?" he demanded.

"I don't understand—"

"Yes, you do. First, second or third—which?"

The others had nearly reached them; there was already an exchange of polite badinage; the men were lifting their hats.

And she did not answer him.



PERSEVERANCE WINS

L AURA—I made a fool of Charley last night.

FLORA—Well, keep on. You may get him yet!

A HOME-MADE VALENTINE

I'LL write my love a valentine—
That is the way to woo her.
With speeches like "Will you be mine?"
I've not the pluck to sue her.

I'll win her by a turn of phrase;
My words shall be so tender
She'll know I'll love her all the days
That God in grace may send her.

"My darling—" but that's far too bold.
"Love, turtle-dove—" that's fond-like;
I'm getting on—"Your hair of gold
I swear is my heart's Klondike!"

That's pretty bad. I'll try again:
"There's naught on earth above you,
Sweetheart, you're vain—sane—plain—inane——"
Oh, damn it all!—"I love you."

HENRY GAINES HAWN.



IDENTIFIED AND CHARACTERIZED

ROBBINS—That's my wife.
HAWKINS—Is that a fact?
"Yes; she's a stubborn thing."



THIEVES

I BID you, Conscience, tell me
If any sin there be
In stealing from a robber
Who boldly steals from me?

For I am pleading guilty
To thefts of transient bliss,
As when I stole from Alice
That first and sweetest kiss.

But that was petty thieving;
She robbed with greater art,
For, smilingly and boldly,
She stole from me my heart

FRANK ROE BATCHELDER.

LES CHAUSSETTES DE PAPA

(MONOLOGUE)

Par Jeannette Larrieu

EELLE entre en tenant à la main une corbeille de chaussettes qu'elle dépose sur une table.

Je suis heureuse, ravie, enchantée. Je l'aime, je suis aimée, je vais me marier, et la cause de mon bonheur—c'est drôle—la cause (*désignant la corbeille*), la voilà: les chaussettes de papa!

(*Elle prend une paire de chaussettes et fait le geste de la porter à ses lèvres.*)

Voici comment cela est arrivé: Hier, maman m'appelle, j'accours vivement. "Suzanne, voici les chaussettes pour ton père, tu les marqueras."

"Bien, maman."

Je prends les chaussettes, six paires (*montrant la corbeille*), celles-là, et je m'installe au coin du feu. Une glace me renvoyait mon image. C'était gentil, très gentil, la petite fille marquant les chaussettes de son papa. C'était même touchant! Marquer les chaussettes de son papa dans notre siècle, fin de siècle—mais, revenons à nos moutons.

C'était gentil, incontestablement, mais une petite femme marquant les chaussettes de son mari, cela eut été bien plus gentil encore. L'amour filial est très bon, très doux, seulement—je me figure que l'amour conjugal—mais chut, chut, n'en parlons pas! Tandis que mes mains étaient occupées—bon soir! mon esprit s'envola vers le pays des rêves. C'est un si joli pays, et l'on y arrive tout de suite.

Ainsi, tenez, en moins d'une minute, je me vois jeune mariée, cousant dans mon propre salon, un salon bien

confortable, bien gai, pas trop grand—les petites pièces sont plus intimes. Un vrai salon pour être deux, pour être seuls et pour s'aimer.

Il est sorti, il est à son bureau. Les maris sont toujours à leur bureau. Pourquoi n'y reçoit-on pas les femmes? C'est inique! Je me plaindrai à l'administration! Il va bientôt rentrer. La sonnette résonnera sous une main impatiente, ding—ding— Je me précipiterai au devant de lui—et, mon dieu (*baissant les yeux*) il m'embrassera et—mon dieu, je l'embrasserai—une fois, ou même plusieurs. Puis il s'assiera à mes pieds et me regardera avec ses jolis yeux bruns. (*Avec précipitation et rougissant*) Je ne sais pas pourquoi je dis bruns par exemple. Ils pourraient aussi bien être bleus—et il me dira:

"Ma chérie, qu'avez vous—qu'as tu?" (*Réfléchissant*) Au fait, me dira-t-il vous ou tu? vous est froid, tu est familier—alors? (*Illuminée*) Il me dira vous pour les choses prosaïques et tu pour les choses—les choses—enfin les choses tendres.

Donc il me demandera:

"Qu'avez vous fait, aujourd'hui, ma chérie?" "J'ai marqué, tes—" non, c'est prosaïque—"vos chaussettes. Embrassez—" non, c'est tendre—"embrasse ta petite femme pour la peine, mon amour."

(*Rougissant*) Ce que c'est que l'imagination, tout de même! Songer à dire à un vrai monsieur: "Embrasse ta petite femme, mon amour!" mais à un personnage vague, avec des moustaches brunes ou blondes—

C'est bien par hasard que je dis brunes. Ce que c'est que l'imagination!

Tiens! on frappe! C'est lui! Quel bonheur! c'est lui.

Entre mon ché—où avais-je la tête! c'est maman. Si elle avait entendu—c'est maman qui vient réclamer les chaussettes.

"Les voici, maman, les six paires marquées et pliées."

Maman en prend une, la regarde, pousse un cri: "Malheureuse enfant! cette lettre—?"

"Est-ce qu'elle n'est pas bien faite? Qu'est ce que—ah, mon dieu!"

Que vois-je! Ce n'est pas un B, l'initiale de papa, c'est un J, l'initiale de—enfin un J!

D'un mouvement nerveux, je déplie les six paires—un J encore—et encore—douze J!

Maman est stupéfaite.

"Je me demands pourquoi tu as choisi cette lettre?"

"Je ne l'ai pas choisi, ma petite maman. Tu comprends, si je l'avais choisi, j'aurais pris un B, le J s'est fait tout seul."

Cette explication, heureusement, suffit à maman, qui me laisse.

À peine est-elle sortie par une porte que par l'autre arrive—c'est un hasard extraordinaire—monsieur de Jonsac, un jeune homme que nous connaissons (*riant*) un peu.

Je me lève, rouge, effarée. Dame! me voir seule en face d'un jeune homme—je suis timide!

"Je pensais trouver madame votre mère ici, mademoiselle."

"Elle y était, mais elle n'y est plus, monsieur."

"Je le vois. Vous travaillez, mademoiselle?"

"Oui, monsieur, je—je marquais les chaussettes de papa."

"Ah! c'est très ver-tu-eux! heureux papa! de bonnes chaussettes!"

Il avait pris deux chaussettes dans mon panier et, distraitemment, les avait enfilées. Moi cela me donnait envie de rire, de voir ses mains ainsi gantées. Lui, ne paraissant pas s'en apercevoir, continuait à parler.

"Des chaussettes bien conditionnées!"

"Oui, monsieur."

"Et bien marquées aussi! Diable! voilà une lettre! Mais, mademoiselle, permettez-moi une question: Pourquoi avez-vous fait un J?"

Avez-vous jamais souhaité d'être souris? Moi, j'avais une envie de me précipiter sous la table!

"C'est parce que—je pensais à autre chose, monsieur," balbutiai-je, n'osant pas lever les yeux, de crainte de rencontrer les siens—

Tout-à-coup, paf! le voilà qui bondit comme un diable hors d'une boîte, en s'écriant:

"Serait-il possible, mon dieu! serait-il possible!"

En disant cela, il joignait ses mains toujours gantées de chaussettes. Celles qui étaient dans la corbeille nous regardaient en souriant. Enfin pour m'achever, voilà maman qui rentre et qui se met à rire aussi.

Dame! vous savez, je suis timide! très timide! Cela m'a troublée et je ne me rappelle pas bien exactement ce qui est arrivé. Je crois—je ne suis pas sûre—mais je crois qu'il m'a embrassé.

Et il y a des gens qui nient que la vertu soit récompensée. Elle l'est toujours! toujours!

Vous voyez bien que c'est en marquant les chaussettes de papa que j'ai gagné un mari. (*Après un instant de réflexion*) Ah, oui—mais c'est en les marquant de travers. (*Bas et d'un ton mystérieux*) Il ne faut pas le dire.



JUST THE GAME

COBWIGGER—Bridge whist requires so much thought that it is said to be a great brain developer.

MERRITT—It's a pity society didn't take it up years ago.

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THE MILLIONAIRE

By Barry Pain

THERE is more than one sort of millionaire. There is the millionaire who is quite anxious that the world shall know that he is a millionaire, and there is the millionaire who is quite as anxious that the general public shall not know that or anything else about him. There is the millionaire who has social ambitions, and the millionaire who has none. There is the man of pleasure who has fluked into fortune and wants to employ his million to get himself more pleasure, and there is the man who has worked into affluence and can see no use for a million except to make another million.

James Tablett was the latter kind of millionaire. He had started down low and worked up high. And he had accomplished everything single-handed; he was unmarried and had never had a partner in his business; he had never slapped anybody on the shoulder; he had never asked anybody to take a drink; he played his own game, and he played it for money and for nothing else but money; he never wanted to live in a better house, or to belong to a smart club, or to even wear a better coat—and he was worse dressed than his junior clerk; he never attended a theatre; he did not care about yachting, and he thought racing immoral. By the time he had made his million people might have accused him of several things—and such is human nature that they did accuse him of a good many—but no one suggested that James Tablett was suffering from swelled head. He did not spend a thousandth part of his income, would not be photo-

graphed, told the journalists to go to hell, and kept himself to himself.

The consequence was that many people never knew that James Tablett was a millionaire at all. For instance, on one occasion, when he was engaged in some particularly delicate financial operation, he felt himself rather run down, a most unusual feeling with him. He remembered that somebody had spoken to him about the fine air of Margate. It was a Saturday night, and rather late, but he managed to catch the last 'bus to Victoria. He inquired for the next train to Margate, and was told that there would be quite a nice train on the following morning.

James Tablett seldom wanted anything, but when he did want something he had to have it. He turned on the porter, who was smiling at his discomfiture, and said: "If there ain't a train, you'll have to make one. Where do you go to settle these things?" He went to Margate by a special, walked to the principal hotel in the small hours, with a brown paper parcel containing his pajamas and a tooth brush under his arm, and asked the night porter for a cheap bedroom. The night porter shirked the responsibility; he put a question or two. "Very natural," said James Tablett, who was not unreasonable. He put down half a sovereign, chiefly in sixpences, borrowed a pair of slippers and went off to his room. And when he went away one of the few hotel servants that he tipped was that night porter.

In London he lived at a hotel. He had no money to spare, so he said, and with him time was money. He

could not be bothered with the details of housekeeping, and it suited him better to let the hotel look after all such matters. It was a private hotel in a back street, where they knew nothing of him except that his money was good, and they had found that out only by practical experience. Had the proprietress of that hotel been told that No. 6 was a millionaire she would have smiled incredulously; millionaires did not come her way.

But the truth is, as I have said, there is more than one sort of millionaire. When James Tablett bought a halfpenny paper—which was not often, because he could see the papers at his club—and paid for it with a penny, he took good care that he had his halfpenny change. He was not a miser; when he really wanted anything he had to have it, whatever it might cost. But he rarely wanted anything, and he never paid for anything that he did not want.

He had a certain number of more or less distant relatives. When he was a poor struggler they did nothing for him, and seemed unaware of his existence; when he became wealthy they came round and attempted civility. But they soon realized the impossibility of being civil to a man who always treated them with calculated rudeness and plain-spoken contempt. "Go away," said James to his cousin, a canon of the Church. "I don't want you to send me any pheasants. I don't want you to write to me and I don't want you to talk to me. I shall never give any of you anything while I am alive, and I shall never leave any of you anything when I am dead. Tell 'em so. I don't want anything to do with you. Go away."

They went away and discussed the situation. James would leave his money to somebody; if not to them, with their claim of kinship, to whom, then? The question was not an easy one to answer. It was very unlikely that the millionaire's money would go to any charitable or philanthropic institution. He was suspicious of every form of charity or philanthropy, and

considered it did more harm than good. He had made many acquaintances in the course of business, but there was not a man alive who could flatter himself that he was James Tablett's intimate friend. He was a bachelor of fifty years' standing and detested women; there was no probability that he would ever marry. As the Canon said, somewhat wistfully, it was really a very open question.

The Canon had a son, and the son knew a man, and the man had a friend by name Joshua Spalding.

Joshua was a man of some redundant independent means and no profession of a regular kind. He employed himself a good deal in strange speculations. He took a fervent interest in the business of other people, and believed that one day he should make a big *coup*; he had made one or two little *coups* already. When, in the circuitous way that I have indicated, he came to hear about James Tablett, he was very interested indeed; for Joshua had a good memory, and he recalled that many, many years ago he had kicked James Tablett, when they were boys together at a grammar school. And now James had blossomed into a millionaire, and the destination of his money after his death was an open question! The situation was worth thinking about.

"A suspicious man, I think you said," remarked Joshua to his friend and informant, Augustus Pepperel, solicitor.

"I should imagine so," replied Augustus. "I hardly know the Canon myself, but his boy talked a good deal about Tablett, and seemed rather amused with the way Tablett had sat on his governor. You know what young men are nowadays. No reverence for their fathers at all. Everything treated as a joke. It used to be very different when I was a boy."

"Very different," Joshua assented, a little impatiently. "It is pretty certain that the Canon would have got nothing anyhow; Tablett will marry. These old idiots get flattered

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by the apparent liking of some young girl; and there must be any amount of women after him."

"I don't think so. I gather that there is nothing about Tablett to make people guess he is very wealthy. Then, again, he never goes into society. Also, it would be the same as it was with the Canon; Tablett would be shrewd enough to see that the girl was after the dubs, and that would be the end of her chances."

A little later Joshua observed that he rather liked the looks of the Canon's son. He was probably a little frivolous, as Augustus had said, but he had a nice, open face. Personally, Joshua said that he liked a nice, open face. He threw out a few other hints that, if Augustus should ever introduce the boy, the boy would be welcomed.

Augustus replied that he wondered what Joshua had got in his head. And he did not introduce the boy.

But Joshua managed to make his acquaintance, anyway. He made himself a very genial and pleasant companion, in spite of the disparity in their years. And he talked about Tablett.

A fortnight later Joshua was ready to begin his campaign.

James Tablett was walking slowly down Cheapside. He wore a shabby gray overcoat, for, though it was not cold, he was a cold-blooded man. His hat was shabby and needed brushing. His umbrella was shabby and bulgy. He looked to be worth fourpence.

He was on his way to his luncheon, and Tablett's luncheon was a fixed and immovable feast. He always took it at the same hour, and at the same uninviting tea shop; and it always consisted of one glass of milk and one scone. This simple fare, together with his undying pleasure in the notice that any attendant accepting a gratuity would be instantly dismissed, satisfied his midday needs and sent him back to work in an improved temper.

This morning his temper was particularly in want of improvement.

An article in an important financial paper had concerned itself a good deal with Tablett, and had not treated him nicely at all; without being actually libelous, it implied that Tablett was a dirty, cunning little thief who sat where he could not be seen and pulled the strings of dubious enterprises in which the public lost money and Tablett found it. It concerned itself with his history, and showed that he had been the prime mover in a lot of shady deals, with which his connection had not so far been a matter of public knowledge.

He was not a particularly thin-skinned man, but the article annoyed him; it was not good for business; and it was so absolutely true that the only thing he could do was to treat it with contempt; a libel action was not to be thought of. He asked nothing but to be allowed to make money in his own way and to keep his name out of his transactions. The privilege was denied him. It was too bad. He went to his luncheon in a temper that might have ruined the character of his glass of milk.

But, as it happened, Tablett was not destined to drink any glass of milk that morning.

Suddenly a large hand slapped him on the shoulder and a jovial voice exclaimed: "Jimmy Tablett, by all that's holy!"

The man who had addressed him was Joshua Spalding—Joshua in new and resplendent clothes, with diamond rings on his hands and a fat gold watchchain across his waistcoat.

Tablett stared at him. "I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance."

Joshua Spalding remained unabashed.

"But you have, Jimmy. It's forty years or so since I set eyes on you, but I should have known you anywhere. Why, we were at Whittington together. Do you remember licking a little chap called Spalding, for cheek? Well, I'm Spalding; and I haven't a doubt you did me a lot of good." It will be observed

that Joshua had slightly edited the facts of that boyish encounter.

"I was certainly at Whittington," Tablett confessed. "I seem to have some vague recollection of the name of Spalding."

"You shall recollect it a good deal better before I have done with you. Look here, now; don't take offense at what I'm going to say, but I can see that the world has not been treating you over and above well. Clerking's not much of work, is it? Oh, you needn't tell me! Your appearance gives it away. I can spot a clerk anywhere. You were off to your luncheon, I'll be bound. How long do they give you? An hour?"

Tablett was almost amused. He was never quite amused. He decided for the time to let his old schoolfellow go on with his blunder.

"Well," said Tablett, "as a matter of fact, I was just going to lunch, but I don't generally take an hour. There's so much to do."

"I've no doubt of it, and the willing horse gets driven the hardest. I remember how infernally conscientious you were as a boy. Off to a bread-shop, I suppose."

"Yes; I know a reasonable place where you can get a scone and—"

"You'll have no scone to-day. You're coming to lunch with me. Salmon, and a grilled cutlet, and a bottle of the best. All very simple, but better than a scone, I fancy. Sha'n't let you say no. You can't think how glad I am to meet somebody from the old shop."

The millionaire stammered his thanks.

"And if you are a few minutes late in getting back it won't matter. I'll guarantee you're punctual enough generally. Look here, if they sack you, I'll find you a berth myself, and it shall be better than the berth you've left. That's a promise."

Tablett was not unwilling. Here, for the first time in his life, he seemed to have found someone who was anxious to do him an act of disinterested kindness. He disapproved of heavy luncheons and of champagne, but—

well, this was exceptional. Before they reached the restaurant he was chatting quite freely about his old schooldays. All thoughts of that very unpleasant article in the financial paper had passed out of his head. He approached to geniality.

At the appearance of the champagne he became a little nervous. "I shouldn't like anybody who knew me to catch me drinking this," he said.

"Bad for the afternoon's work?" suggested Spalding.

"That and other things. The fact is, we disapprove of champagne at this hour in the City. We—well, we disapprove of it."

Joshua Spalding said he was sorry he did not know more about the City. He felt sure it must be so interesting. He had never been any good at business. He had enough to live on, and he amused himself. Once or twice he had tried a little speculation, and it had not always come off.

Spalding had the sense to tell the truth on any point where he could. The best liars sometimes forget the absolute necessity for this. He never told any lie at all that would or could be found out. Nobody needs good credit more than the liar, and he should take trouble to get it.

Tablett's disapproval of champagne was rather of the habit than of the wine. Recognizing that he was now in for it, and that he might as well have the enjoyment if he risked the stigma, he took his share nobly.

Later in the luncheon he became aware that his old schoolfellow was trying as delicately as possible to lend him a fiver. He felt half-inclined to take it.

It would, perhaps, be too much to say that Tablett's heart warmed toward his host, but it certainly rose several degrees above its customary zero. He thought to himself how staggered Spalding would be if he knew the truth. In the meantime, Spalding thought how immensely staggered Tablett would be under similar circumstances.

Two or three times toward the end

of luncheon Tablett had an impulse to proclaim himself no starveling clerk but a man of great fortune. He wanted to talk about the men he could buy up, and the amount of one single cheque that he had written that morning; briefly, he wanted to brag. These impulses were mere champagne; he recognized them as such, and restrained them.

It was half-past two when he rose to go; this meant that he would return to his office one hour later than his normal time; it also meant that by now his private secretary had definitely decided that Tablett must have dropped dead. He thanked his host heartily.

"And look me up to-morrow. I won't ask you to my home, because it's not much of a place. But come to this address in the afternoon, and we'll have a cup of tea. It's my business place. I dare say they'll let me out for a few minutes."

As he walked back to his office his eye was brighter than usual, and his leaden face had turned crimson in spots. He was still smoking the excellent Havana that Spalding had handed him. He felt slightly and not unpleasantly excited. A business acquaintance stopped him.

"Hullo, Mr. Tablett! Just back from your solicitor's?"

"Me? No. What for?"

"Nothing; but if the *Mirror* had said about me what it said about you this morning, I should have laid the foundations of my libel action by now."

"Then you'd have been a fool, Mr. Soames," said Tablett, furiously. "At least, you'd have acted foolishly—I did not intend to speak offensively. What's the use of fighting men of straw? You lose your money, for you would never get a penny out of them. They're a set of rogues and blackmailers. I treat the *Mirror* as all decent people do—with contempt."

Mr. Soames shrugged his shoulders. "Well, it's no business of mine," he said, as he moved away.

"One moment, Soames. About

those Instantaneas—I'll see you get yours all right."

"Thanks, but I haven't applied for any. I changed my mind at the last moment—so many irons in the fire just now."

Tablett was very angry, chiefly with himself. He had lost his head and said the wrong thing to Soames. The proprietors of the *Mirror* were, and were known to be, substantial men. The *Mirror* had always had the very highest character, and it weighed a good deal with the investing public. The attempt to conciliate Soames had been a weakness and a blunder. It had given Soames the chance to hint that he did attach importance to the *Mirror's* disclosures; a week before Soames would have jumped at those Instantaneas. It would have been much better if he had said he had been to his solicitors, and was taking action. That would have given him time, at any rate.

Being angry, James Tablett now made another mistake. He sacked his private secretary for a trivial fault. And the secretary went away reflecting that he had a good deal of interesting information about James Tablett for sale, and wondering where would be the best place to sell it.

The great lights of the financial world are right in considering it to be a mistake to drink champagne at luncheon.

Spalding remained at the restaurant a little longer, sipping his coffee and reading again an article that he had clipped out of the current issue of the *Mirror*. It referred to Mr. James Tablett, and was strongly expressed. Spalding was quite content so far. The millionaire was well disposed toward him, and had never for a moment suspected that Spalding knew him to be a millionaire. At this moment Spalding expected to pull off his *coup* in a month; in reality, it took him double that time.

The next afternoon Joshua Spalding went to the office of the Anglo-American Financial Investment Syndicate. As a matter of fact, the syn-

dicate was Tablett, and Tablett was the syndicate. Ushered into Tablett's room, Spalding became smiling, but somewhat shamefaced.

"What an ass I've made of myself!" he exclaimed. "What on earth must you think of me?"

"Then you've discovered that I'm not a thirty-shilling clerk, after all! How did you find it out?"

"Heard two men in the train talking about you. At least, I felt pretty certain it must be you, and when I asked the way from the policeman outside——"

"I see. Then you won't try to lend me a fiver to-day?"

"I apologize for that, you know. I'll never judge by appearances again."

"You needn't apologize at all," said Tablett, seriously. "You believed me to be poor, and yet you were kind to me; when I was poor I met with precious little kindness. You're the only man who has been civil to me for a long time past, without expecting to get something out of it. I think very well of you. Come and have a cup of tea. And, by the way, what was it those men were saying about me?"

"Yes, I'd meant to tell you that. It rather amused me. They said that some financial paper—I forget the name—had approached you with two articles about you, one eulogistic and one damnatory. The editor said that for fifty pounds you could choose which should be printed in the paper. Then they said you handed the man his fifty, and declared you preferred the damnatory article, on the ground that his praise would do you more harm than his blame. I suppose there isn't a word of truth in it."

"Not perhaps so very far away," replied Tablett.

"I thought it almost good enough to send to some paper."

"Send it, by all means, if you like. Now tell me plainly what I can do for you."

"Nothing, Jimmy, nothing. I've got all the money I want for the sort of life I lead. Give me a cup of tea and call it quits."

The two men met almost daily after

that. Every day Spalding's hold got stronger and stronger. He showed the utmost tact and discretion. He was never subservient, and he mixed criticism with his flattery. He stuck to his statement that he wanted nothing. And by the end of two months he had declined a seat on the board of a big company and refused two certain ways that Tablett pointed out to him of making a large sum of money quickly. And he pulled off his *coup*. He stayed on for a week afterward for the sake of decency, and then went back to his home in the country.

He told himself that he could count on the fingers of his two hands the lies that he had told to Tablett. The rest had been all pure tact. He was so pleased that he wanted to talk about it. At least, he wanted to talk about the results of the *coup*. The means by which these results had been obtained he described, with some inaccuracy, one night to his friend, Augustus Pepperel, at the moment when whiskey had warmed and opened their hearts.

"How did it first come about?" asked Pepperel. "You didn't know the man."

"I had been at school with him. In our schooldays I had been of a good deal of assistance to him one way and another, and I suppose he's got a devil of a memory. At any rate, he saw me in the street and ran after me. He would have me dine with him that night. We got on rippingly together. One clean forgot he was a millionaire; he wasn't boisterous exactly, but he was splendid company. I liked the poor old chap immensely."

"Same age as yourself, ain't he?" asked Pepperel, who was naturally depressed at his friend's good luck.

"As far as years go, yes. But he's not strong, you know; he's very far from being strong. He's got a beautiful nature. I liked him for himself and nothing else. He offered me things, but I would never take them; I liked him for his own sake. Then one day he took me to his solicitor's—I never dreamed what for—and there and then made the will leaving me

everything, as I have told you. I'm not what you would call an emotional man, but that touched me, Augustus. Yes, within the last few weeks my whole fortune has been altered; I'm the heir to a million."

"It's not in your pocket yet. The cracked pitcher goes the oftenest to the well. He may outlive you, Joshua, my boy."

"He was refused by an insurance office twenty years ago. His face is a sort of blue-lead color, and he can't run up stairs. He has overworked and underfed himself all his life. He's a man that worries, and worry kills. I know his doctor is most anxious about him. Of course, I should be very sorry if anything were to——"

"Never mind about that," said Augustus Pepperel. "Would you take a five-pound note for your chance of ever coming into this money?"

"Oh, go to the devil!"

"That's no answer."

"No, of course not."

"Well, I'd be sorry to pay more."

James Tablett was every bit as ill as Joshua Spalding had supposed. Eighteen months after he died, while Joshua was still in the enjoyment of rude health. So far the *coup* had come off exactly.

What spoiled it was that three months before his death James Tablett went hopelessly bankrupt. He had lost the confidence of the public, and this catastrophe he followed up by losing his head and doing foolish things. He was moving in the down-hill direction when Joshua made the first steps toward his great *coup*.

There are several morals in this story, and the patient collector of such things may hunt for them.



A VALENTINE

RED roses, dear, I send to thee—
Not that *their* glory you may see,
But that this flower, which artists limn
As beauty's sweetest synonym,
May look on you with envious eyes,
And know that 'neath the ethereal skies
The fairest thing on earth that grows
Is *you*, sweetheart, and not the rose.

C. CLAYTON BROWN.



THE INEVITABLE EVADED

THE SOULFUL-EYED GIRL—Tell me, Mr. Savage, were you ever disappointed in love?

THE GRIM BACHELOR—No; I have never been married.



FIGS FROM THISTLES

CRAWFORD—I can't see any good in these fads of the smart set.

CRABSHAW—Why, man, look at the fine subjects they make for sermons by sensational ministers.

THE GOSSIPING TRIBE

CURSE the little things unspoken
 That one quite unwilling hears
 Whispered loud, and by that token
 Knows intended for his ears.
 Mrs. Grundys, matrons haughty,
 Long beneath their tongues have rolled
 Dainty morsels—something naughty—
 Hinted at, but never told.

How discreet they seem in giving
 Out the secrets known to them!
 Someone's home life's not worth living,
 Someone saw—ahem! ahem!
 Well, it would not be surprising
 If *he'd* find out *she's* so bold!
 Always something compromising
 Hinted at, but never told.

Curse the little things malicious,
 Things they hint but ne'er describe!
 Reputation's vultures vicious
 Are the Mrs. Grundy tribe.
 Peace destroyers, common vandals,
 Wolves within the social fold,
 With their lengthy list of scandals
 Hinted at, but never told.

ROY FARRELL GREENE.

SO UNFEMININE

JACK—Maude plays a fair game of billiards; but she detests pool.
 HARRY—Why so?
 JACK—She isn't accustomed to pockets.

AS OCCASIONALLY NOTED

MRS. SCRAPPINGTON—Women, as a general rule, have more sympathy than men.

MR. SCRAPPINGTON—That's right! A married man never feels half so sorry for his bachelor friends as his wife does.

AFTER THE DARKNESS

By May Isabel Fisk

SILENCE within. The candles, guttering in their sconces, bewailed their approaching demise in impotent waxen tears. After one vehement flare the fire settled down to a sullen glow. Melancholy—invisible, indefinable, but grimly present—pervaded the room.

A woman stood at the far window, looking out into the night. The wind blew in from the sea and the boom and roar of the surf were distinct over the shrieking of the gale. A frightened moon thrust its face through the flying clouds; its trembling rays fell athwart the writhing branches and cast grotesque shadows on the frost-rimed earth.

It was madness for man or beast to venture forth on such a night, yet a horseman dashed through the park gates and over the bridge spanning the brook. The erstwhile brawling stream now lay a mere thread of frozen silver, glistening in the fitful light.

The rider turned and waved to the woman at the window. But at the moment the terrified moon fled behind a shelter of clouds, obscuring horse and burden. Though unresponsive, the figure at the casement kept its vigil, listening intently until the last hoof-beat was lost in the stress of the tempest. With a sigh, she turned back into the room.

For some moments she moved about uncertainly. Then, as if yielding to some mysterious but potent agency, she slowly approached a tall, old-fashioned escritoire. She hesitated for an instant, then took from her bosom a tiny key on a slender chain. Unlocking a compartment, from be-

neath a packet of letters she drew forth a photograph. Half-fearfully she glanced about the apartment. Silence—no one.

Long and tenderly she gazed at the countenance, then murmuring: "Just for this once—just for this once," pressed her lips passionately to the unresponsive mouth, while the tears welled from her eyes.

Then, with a gesture of determination, she seated herself at the desk, placed the picture before her so that the eyes seemed to look into her eyes, and began to write.

BELOVED:

You have asked me many times if I love you, and I have always evaded a direct reply. But to-night there is something that bids—nay, forces—me to put aside my reserve and openly confess the secret of my soul.

Yes, I love you.

Now that I read over those three words, how cold and meaningless they sound, compared with all my heart contains for you. But you—you will understand. You know me so well. I have often wondered if you guessed.

In a lull in the wind there comes to me the frantic beating of the waves on the rocks below. It is but an echo of the tumult raging in my breast.

I am all alone to-night. Leslie insisted on riding over to the rectory on some matter pertaining to the estate, and will not return until midnight. And the next hour—the sweetest of my existence—is devoted to you.

For that time I am no longer Mrs. Leslie Langdon, devoted wife, but Philis, your sweetheart—the woman who loves you better than all else in life. I know I am doing wrong in thus acknowledging what most good women would have died rather than disclose; but,

dear, God forgive me, I could not, could not longer keep it from you.

I think in the lives of all women and men there comes an unguarded moment when the secret hunger of the soul for that which it will, refuses to be longer ignored, and Love sobs aloud for his own.

Such a moment is now mine. And, though you despised me for my weakness, I could not retract one word.

I love Leslie—as a mother loves her child—with an affectionate, protecting care that would shield him from every vicissitude of life. He was the love of my girlhood; now I am a woman, and you have filled my woman's heart.

At first I was afraid my love for you might prove a mere infatuation, a caprice of the moment, unworthy of you or me. But I have deliberately analyzed my feelings, and I find nothing that I blush to own. I love you for all that is best and noblest in you. This love has become a part of my life, and it cannot be vanquished until my spirit goes with it.

But, dear, stronger and even more vital is the duty I owe my husband. He is so absolutely unsuspicious of all this—he is so wrapped up in his admiration of me—that he never for an instant suspects the return I give him is mere affection. And he shall never know.

I have tried so hard to let him fill my life.

Still, I shall not have lived uselessly, for he often tells me, with tears in his dear, boyish eyes, that Heaven can hold nothing for him, as companionship with me is perfect paradise. It is so pathetic.

Just now I felt faint and raised the window. There came a gust of wind that bore with it a poor, half-frozen little bird. I held it by the fire, but the heat failed to revive it, and it died in my hand. I have heard this is such a bad omen—a warning of approaching catastrophe. I am so nervous and depressed. The fire, too, has gone nearly out, and is fast graying over.

It is like my heart—it has burnt itself out, and nothing but the ashes remains.

I hear the sound of hoof-beats—my time must be up. And so, dear, good-night and good-bye—forever. May all that is most to be desired come to you, and may you be happy. You are a man—you are free. Of all the success you win in your career I shall be proud, and rejoice that once I had your love. Oh, God! why is life so hard?

PHILLIS LANGDON.

She rang the bell and ordered the letter despatched by mounted messenger.

The approaching hoof-beats grew rapidly more distinct; now they sounded on the bridge, now through the gates, and now, with a loud clatter, abruptly ceased at the stable door.

The woman knelt before the dying fire and endeavored to coax the dull smoulder into renewed life. The effort was futile; the vital spark had expired.

"Like my heart," she murmured, "nothing but the ashes remains!"

In the court below, lights were flashing in all directions, as excited servants ran here and there. The master's horse had dashed into the yard riderless, a broken stirrup dangling from the saddle, which was turned half-over. The animal's knees were cut and bleeding, as from a fall.

Half-way through the woods they found the young squire by the roadside, quite dead.

The horse must have taken fright at the shifting shadows, and, starting violently, unseated its rider.

Death had come instantly and painlessly, they explained to the wife as they brought the quiet burden to her. Through the rest of the night the woman knelt by the side of the still figure, her grief too great for tears.

When the gray dawn crept in at the window they gently drew her away to her own apartments.

She was numb and dazed. But one idea flashed clear—oh, the pity of it!—his happy young life taken away, while hers—

The sun was just breaking through the mist on the horizon when a letter was placed in her hands. The man had ridden all night, she was told. Mechanically, she turned the envelope over. As the significance of the writing gradually penetrated her dulled brain, a sudden thrill shook her from head to foot.

She was free!

And then she bowed her head and thanked God the thought had not come to her before.

Very reverently she broke the seal, and by the light of the new day read:

MY LOVE: I have been thinking long and seriously of all you said at our last interview. Until then I had hoped, in my blind man-fashion, that some day I might break your reserve and you would come to me.

I know now this is never to be.

Of course, you were right in your every protest; yet, sweetheart, I have loved you so madly—selfishly, if you will—that I would not admit the truth of your denials. I feel, at last, so keenly how infinitely above and beyond me you are in your saintly purity that I have resolved—though it is worse than death to me—to give you up completely.

And this, knowing—though you have never told me in words—that you love me.

Of that one day of bliss no one can ever rob me. Those pathetic brown eyes cannot lie, and they all unwittingly betrayed their secret to me.

What am I that should be so blessed by the sweetest, the dearest, the truest woman God ever made?

It has made of me the veriest egotist to think that you should have found in me anything worthy of that most priceless treasure—your woman's heart. Life with you would have been bliss unspeakable. As it is, the agony of renunciation

is past, and I am absolutely calm, with the calmness of death; the death of happiness, of hope and of love.

There is nothing that I particularly care for left me, and so I have made my plans in accordance with what I believe you would approve.

After leaving you yesterday and carefully considering the matter, I took steps to effect my exchange into the foreign service. I have long been aware—through your subtle discovery—that my little ward cares for me otherwise than as her guardian. To-day was my appointed time for turning over her affairs into her own hands.

I explained the necessary financial details to her, and then I asked her to be my wife.

The dear child consented, and to the best of my ability I shall make her life all that she most desires.

By the time this reaches you we shall be married and on our way to the East.

It is superfluous for me to pray: May God's blessing rest upon you! Women such as you live always in the shadow of the Eternal One.

NORMAN WOOD.

Slowly the woman raised her head; the white lips moved.

"Nothing but the ashes remains," she murmured; "nothing but the ashes remains!"

THE AUTOMOBILE

THAT thing's in too tearing a hurry;
An old-fashioned hansom for me!
A cabby that's sleepy and blurry—
That thing's in too tearing a hurry—
For even *his* speed is a worry
When I'm riding up town with Marie.
That thing's in too tearing a hurry;
An old-fashioned hansom for me!

S. G. S.

THE WAY WITH HER

SMITHERS—Man proposes and God disposes.
SMYTHE—What about woman?
SMITHERS—Woman? She just poses.

TO THE UNKNOWN LOVE

DEAR one, the slow years come and go,
 And still we are apart!
 We know not each the other's face,
 Though deep within the heart
 Burns evermore the flame of hope—
 The fever and the smart.

Sometimes within the nether mind
 Vague memories arise
 Of other times and other climes,
 Of lips and brow and eyes.
 Sometimes it seems the murmuring breeze
 Is heavy with your sighs.

I hear your voice whene'er a bird
 Pours forth its heart in song,
 And in the moaning of the sea,
 When nights are drear and long.
 I strain my eyes to find your eyes
 In every passing throng.

Somewhere I know you lie to-night
 And dream fond dreams of me;
 Oh, that the earthly veil might fall
 And let the spirit see!
 Perhaps 'tis but a single wall
 That hides you, dear, from me.

JOHN BARKER.



SOMEWHAT OF A PRODIGY

MAE—Susie has a wonderful memory.

MAUDE—I never saw any symptoms of it.

MAE—Well, she has. Why, that girl can remember who gave her what for days after Christmas.



THE DESTROYER

"I'M afraid poor old Hithard is done for. His locomotor ataxia is too much for him at last."

"What make of automobile is that?"

THE ESCAPE OF MRS. JOHNSTONE

By Anita Mufioz Friedrichs

"YOU are the most narrow-minded, prejudiced and unreasonable woman I ever heard talk, and I'll be hanged if I'll stay home and listen to you any longer! When a man cannot even go out to play a simple game of cards without first hearing a long lecture on the subject, it's time he did something desperate."

Mr. Brook Nelson Johnstone flung himself out of the room angrily, ran down the stairs and slammed the hall door after him.

Mrs. Johnstone sat by the window sobbing gently, her face completely buried in the folds of her handkerchief, making a picture of abject woe and abandonment as she leaned her shapely head, profusely covered with golden hair, against the velvet cushions of the chair. Her morning gown of light blue cashmere and white lace clung to her figure sympathetically and fell to the floor in long, disconsolate folds.

It was the last day of the year. The ground was covered with snow and the air was sharp and cold. Handsome sleighs, filled with smart people, went past constantly. The Avenue was gay with color and movement. But Mrs. Johnstone sobbed on unheeding, insensible to everything save her own troubles.

After a time she removed the handkerchief from her face and gazed forlornly out of the window. How bright the world looked! And yet, amid all her pleasant surroundings, she was the unhappiest woman in the world. With a long-drawn sigh she rose and walked up and down the room, pausing a moment to address her reflection in the mirror.

"I have been married only a year; I have everything money can buy; I can go and come when I please, and yet I have shed more tears—bitter tears—in these last six months than in my whole life before. Only twenty-two years old, and heartbroken and forsaken!"

The tears started afresh.

"It all comes of marrying a man with brothers. For the first six months they had the decency to let us alone, but after that I presume they thought the honeymoon was over and we were tired of each other's society, for they came frequently, and now they contrive to never let us alone. Maybe, as Brook says, I am disagreeable; but I wonder what other woman would put up with it. They are forever running over to ask Brook to go out with them. Why on earth they do not realize that he owes me a duty, and is not a bachelor like themselves, I cannot imagine."

She walked back to the window and looked out. A sweet-faced, stylishly dressed girl was just alighting from a sleigh that stood before the door. She ran up the stoop and rang the bell.

Mrs. Johnstone gave an exclamation of delight and went to the door to meet her. "Agnes!" she exclaimed, brokenly, as she threw her arms around her sister's neck, "I am so glad you have come! I am in such trouble I really cannot bear it alone!"

Her sister led her to a couch, and they sat side by side. "Brook is so hateful and selfish, Agnes, and neglects me so! My heart is broken!"

Miss Bradley looked at her sister's tear-stained face with wonder.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing but a frightful quarrel with Brook, in which we both said perfectly terrible things to each other," Mrs. Johnstone replied, dolefully.

"Now, that is too bad! We have all been so contented in the belief that you and Brook were the most congenial and the happiest young married couple in existence."

"And so we were until we came back from Newport." Mrs. Johnstone choked back a sob, sniffled, and applied her handkerchief. "It's all because of his horrid brothers! Agnes, whatever you do, never marry the youngest of four brothers. Try to find an only child or an orphan, if you want happiness, but do not be persuaded to make your life miserable by marrying a member of a large family."

"But I thought they were so very good to you!"

"Oh, they are more than kind," Mrs. Johnstone replied, sarcastically, "but I see through them now! It is only to keep on the right side of me, in order to get Brook out to their old poker parties and stag dinners, that they are so lovely. Agnes, it will surprise you to know that things are at a crisis with us. It has come to this—a sharp contest for the society of my husband between my husband's family and me. Just now both sides are pulling strongly, and it is only a question of a few weeks when he will have to go one way or the other. That much I am sure of, and I told Brook so this morning."

"What did he say to that?"

"Of course, one word led to another, and we really had a most miserable time of it." Mrs. Johnstone sighed wearily. "It commenced in this way: Brook and I were comfortably eating breakfast, when I remarked that mother wanted us to go over to dinner and spend the evening, as Cousin Helen, from Boston, had just arrived. Brook did not reply for a few moments, then he said, with affected carelessness: 'Oh, by the way, Dolly, can you not go by yourself? I will call for you about one o'clock. The boys have a stag dinner

at the house, with a little game of cards after it, and I promised them I would go over.' I was angry in a minute. This was occurring too frequently. 'I shall remain at home by myself,' I said, coldly.

"But you enjoy going to your mother's so much!" he remonstrated.

"If I had preferred my mother's society to yours, I should not have left her for you," I replied, icily. "Anyway, under the circumstances, I do not care to worry her by letting her see how I am neglected. I spent two evenings there last week, alone, while you were enjoying the society of your charming brothers." This angered him, I think—he simply adores his family—and words ran high for a time, until he flew out of the house, slamming the door, saying that he would not live with me, and that he was going to do something desperate."

"Did he really say that?" Agnes inquired, indignantly.

"Yes, he did. Maybe not those words exactly, but with the same meaning."

Both women sat looking into space thoughtfully. Suddenly Mrs. Johnstone sprang to her feet. "I know what I shall do," she exclaimed; "I'll run away! I will do something desperate."

Her sister looked at her in amazement. "You would never dare! and where would you run to?" Then, as a thought struck her: "Go to our house at Newport, Dolly. Mrs. Jenkins is there, and she could make you comfortable."

"No; he would think of that at once and go right there, find me and bring me home in disgrace, like a child that had run away from school. I shall go far away—to Chicago," mentioning the first place she thought of. "You jump into the sleigh, Agnes, drive to the Grand Central station, and get a ticket and a state-room for me. Here is my pocket-book."

"Very well, Dolly, I will!" Agnes jumped up, greatly excited. "Brook has behaved badly, and he deserves a

lesson. Now, let us get a time-table and find out when the first express leaves."

They hurried to the library. After much searching the desired time-table was found, and they ascertained that the best train left at four-thirty in the afternoon.

"It is now eleven," Dolly said, looking at her watch. "That will give me time to pack my things, dress, eat something and then go to the bank for some money. I'll take only enough to last me a month, for I am sure I shall be dead by that time."

"Oh, no, you will not at all," her sister replied, encouragingly, "for Brook will find you, and ask your pardon, and you will be happy ever after. Just be plucky now and all will come out well. Whatever you do, let the servants know nothing of your plans, for Brook will put them through a rigid examination."

"You will go with me to the station, of course, Agnes?" Mrs. Johnstone said, a little sigh escaping her.

"It's too bad that I can't!" Agnes exclaimed, vexedly; "but I am due to sing at Mrs. Burten-Randes's musical at four o'clock, and cannot possibly disappoint her. But I'll get the tickets for you and leave them with the agent. All you will have to do is to inquire for them."

"I never went anywhere alone in my life, and I know I shall be dreadfully afraid," Mrs. Johnstone lamented; "but I shall get through some way. I hope Brook will regret his harsh words when he sees to what discomfort he has driven me. Good-bye, dear." She commenced to sob again. "If anything happens to me, always remember that I loved you and found you a true friend when I wanted you."

Agnes uttered words of encouragement, left her sister weeping on the couch, ran down the stairs out of the front door to the sleigh, gave a short order, and was driven away. Gradually Mrs. Johnstone became calmer, and she went to her desk and wrote a note.

DEAR BROOK: I love you too much to permit you to do anything desperate in order to avoid me or my lectures, so I have decided to go away. I am sure you will not be lonely, as you will always be able to secure the society of at least one of your brothers.

DOLLY.

She folded it up, enclosed it in an envelope and sealed it carefully. "I hope Brook will not think it is sarcastic—he abhors sarcasm," she said. "I only intend it to be reproachful." She walked across the room and touched a bell.

The butler appeared at the door. "Parker," said Mrs. Johnstone, "you will give this note to Mr. Johnstone when he comes in. See that he receives it at once. I am called away unexpectedly. Tell Michael to have the sleigh at the door at two o'clock." Parker bowed and disappeared.

At exactly twenty minutes after four a cab drove up to the station, and Mrs. Brook Nelson Johnstone, dressed warmly in velvet and furs, a heavy veil over her face, and carrying a small valise, alighted, paid the cabman, looked around apprehensively, and then walked through the doors to the ticket office. In order that her husband should get no trace of her, she had dismissed her sleigh at the bank.

There was much confusion and excitement. The tickets and change were thrust into her hands, and she was hustled along with the crowd until she found herself in the car, sitting alone in a small compartment and being carried out of the station at a great rate of speed.

She looked around. In the corner was a light-yellow leather traveling bag, and leaning against the wall was an umbrella with a gaudy handle of gilt and blue turquoise stones.

"Either someone has forgotten those things and left them here, or there is some mistake," she reflected, nervously. "Anyway, this state-room is mine. It is bought and paid for." She unloosed her coat, removed her hat and veil and leaned back

wearily. A head was thrust into the doorway.

"Tickets, please, madam." The conductor looked them over deliberately and placed the punches carefully.

"The lower berth is yours, madam."

Mrs. Johnstone looked at him in astonishment. "The lower berth! I have engaged and paid for the whole stateroom."

"There must be some mistake, madam. A gentleman has the upper berth. He is in the smoking-car now. Those are his things in the corner," and he moved on indifferently.

Mrs. Johnstone threw up her hands in dismay. Could anything be worse? She determined to get another stateroom, and rang for the porter, who appeared promptly. To her anxious inquiries he replied that every berth in the train was sold, that he could not possibly do anything, and after a while he went away, leaving Mrs. Johnstone comfortless.

She looked out of the window at the fast-flying, snow-covered ground, with tears of bitterness, fright and sorrow. Her thoughts flew back to her husband. "What would Brook think if he could see me now, compelled by his harsh words to remain all night in a stateroom alone with a strange man?" she asked herself.

She looked at the gay-colored valise and the gaudy-handled umbrella with a feeling of fear and loathing. "No gentleman would carry such things. Of course, he is some sporting man or gambler!" In despair, she put her head down on her arm and gave way entirely.

"What a fool I have been—yes, I might as well acknowledge it—to leave the protection of my husband and home to come in contact with all this unpleasantness! I was entirely too hasty. Maybe, if I had been kinder to Brook and not aggravated him, he would not have said all those things." But the darkened landscape offered her no consolation, and she sat there, absorbed by her sad and remorseful thoughts.

Her mind went back to her wedding trip, when she and Brook were running away together, happy, loving and contented. How little she thought, then, that she should ever live to see this wretched day! She heard a heavy footstep coming down the aisle, and looked at the door apprehensively, but the man passed on to the next car. A sigh of relief escaped her. The suspense was really terrible, and Mrs. Johnstone suffered agonies.

"Someone else is coming. Surely he is stopping at the door!"

With a quick motion she turned her head and looked out of the window steadily. The man paused a moment, as if to ascertain if it were the correct stateroom, then entered and stood quietly. Mrs. Johnstone almost screamed with nervousness and fear.

"Dolly!"

She sprang to her feet.

"Brook!" she cried, hysterically, throwing herself into his arms. "Darling Brook, have you come to rescue me from that horrid man?"

"What horrid man?" her husband asked, in surprise.

"Why, the gambler that those things in the corner belong to," she sobbed.

"That is my valise. I borrowed it, also the umbrella, from Jack Lowden, when I decided in a hurry that I had business in Chicago," he replied. "Don't you like them?"

Dolly looked at them critically. "Well, really, Brook, I did not at first, but now I think they are lovely. Very stylish and only just a little bit too gay."

"Sit down here, Dolly, and tell me where you are going. This is unexpected, is it not?" Mr. Johnstone took a seat beside his wife and looked at her keenly.

She answered timidly, without meeting his glance: "I thought you did not love me any more, so I was running away, Brook."

He made no reply. For a few moments nothing was heard but the noise of the fast-flying express. "How did

you get here?" she asked at last. "I was never so surprised."

Her husband's face assumed an ag-grieved expression, as he replied: "All day the echo of my wife's cutting words at the breakfast table ran through my head. I said to myself, 'Dolly is tired of me; nothing I do pleases her, so I will go away.'"

Mrs. Johnstone did not observe the twinkle of amusement in her husband's eyes as she exclaimed, excitedly: "Why, what a coincidence! And to think you even got the other berth in my stateroom! Well, that only goes to prove, Brook darling, that we were meant for each other and were never intended to be separated."

The next morning, while Mr. Johnstone was in the smoking-car, Mrs. Johnstone, gazing idly about, spied a crumpled piece of paper on the

floor. Picking it up and smoothing it out, she read this:

DEAR BROOK:

Dolly is runing away on express which leaves G. C. D. at four-thirty for Chicago. She is overwhelmed with grief and heartbroken over what occurred this morning. I have engaged stateroom for her, but enclose ticket for upper berth, as I feel sure you will not let the poor little thing go on her miserable journey alone. My advice to you both is to begin all over again, making resolutions to try to please each other in the future more than you have in the past.

With love,

AGNES.

A smile illuminated the countenance of Mrs. Brook Nelson Johnstone. "I always knew Agnes was a dear," she said, softly, to the flying landscape.



THE FRIENDS OF YOUTH

"OH, where are the friends of my youth?"

In a moment reflective I cried;

Through the door peeped a head, and the office boy said:

"There's a gent wants to see you outside."

'Twas one of the friends of my youth!

With emotion he grasped my hand tight;

"You will pardon these tears, I've not seen you for years—

Could you loan me a V till to-night?"

E. P. NEVILLE.



NOT HARD TO BELIEVE

BIBBS—Mrs. Homeleigh says her husband is a great sufferer.

GIBBS—I'm not surprised. How long has he been married to her?



JUDGMENT WITHHELD

NEWLYWED—I suppose you know I am happily married?

FRIEND—No; I haven't seen your wife yet.

ONE MAN'S WAY

"SUCH undue freedom, sir," I said,
 "I cannot understand."
 But he looked deep into my eyes
 And—simply *kept* my hand.

"Merely a friend you are," I said,
 "And liberties like this
 I never will permit." But he—
 He only *took* the kiss.

"My lover? Nonsense, sir!" I said;
 "I *never can* love you."
 But he—he took me in his arms,
 And said, "You do! you do!"

"I cannot marry you," I said,
 "And live with you for life."
 He simply said, "You will! you will!"
 And now I am his wife.

JAMES T. WHITE.



AVOIDING THE RUSH

POLITICIAN—Tell me the best way to get out of politics.
 FRIEND—Turn Prohibitionist.
 "Oh, that's too sudden; I want to get out gradually."



INOPPORTUNE

I HAD Jane in the sleigh,
 But the time was ill-fated.
 She *would* go that day;
 I had Jane in the sleigh,
 One arm driving the gray,
 T'other arm vaccinated.
 I had Jane in the sleigh,
 But the time was ill-fated.

S. G. S.

PALMISTRY FOR CHARITY

By Stella Weiler-Taylor

SHE was reading palms for a charity.

There was the usual screened enclosure, with somewhat bizarre equipments, and Greta herself, a very up-to-date sibyl, in a silver shimmering confection from Paquin.

Palm-reading, especially for a charity, is a good deal of a bore, and Greta was yawning. Outside, on the stage, Bobby Carter was imitating famous actors. Greta could catch bits of his *Lord Chumley* in love: "Cawn't eat, cawn't smoke, cawn't sleep. D—that moon!" and she smiled contentedly. She was engaged to Bobby.

Her little Indian basket was filled with silver. The charity would profit by the self-interest of the smart set. Sometimes, in the law of economy, even follies are turned to good account.

Bobby's clever turn ended, and the applause was drowned in gems from "The Rounders," the tent curtains parted.

"My dear Miss Harmon!"

"Ah! Mr. Drake."

"I've come to consult the Weird Wonder. I've had tea at the Jap booth, coffee at the Turkish bazaar, sherbet at the Ice Palace; I've tried my want of luck at the wheel of fortune, and sold a job-lot of pies at the Yankee Kitchen. I'm waiting for my man to help me haul home a truck-load of scent sachets and postage stamp boxes. What further and unknown dangers threaten me, divine oracle?"

Mr. Drake sat down, extending two carefully manicured hands. He was a man of forty-something—above the

average in height, dark, well-groomed, profiled like Narcissus, and thin as Mephistopheles.

Greta, taking his hand, shivered. She scarcely knew why; only she did not fancy men who make small use for good of splendid opportunities. She wove in various adroit, girlish morals among her technical chatter of lines and grilles and crosses.

"Don't look at me so, Miss Harmon," he cried, lightly. "Your eyes make me deuced uncomfortable. Seem to read a fellow's soul. No doubt it is bewitching to the white-souled ones, but mine must show up like a French novel. Really, your mother should be called. She might be particular about what you read."

"I'm translating very freely, and I'm skipping the details," said the grave Greta.

"You're making me out a great, blooming butterfly," he grumbled.

"N-no."

"Then a snake. It's snakish, your description! I rather prefer the snake rôle to the butterfly."

"Of course, for it fits you! What more do you ask? The world admits you have the wisdom of a serpent, and the women grant you its fascination."

"Who wouldn't be a snake! But—" here he looked into her eyes with the meaningless devotion of a man of the world—"I don't fascinate you."

"No."

He turned her hand and noted Bobby's ring blazing on her engagement finger.

"Biffany's Celebrated Antidote for Snakes," he commented.

Greta snatched away her hand, and

raising it, kissed the diamond. "Dear Bobby," she whispered, with a smile.

"Bobby's to be envied. You're a very good sort, Miss Harmon. With you to help him, Carter will land in the Senate some day. Oh, he's clever enough. You needn't remind me. You couldn't like him else. But I tell you it is the woman a man loves who makes or breaks his career. Don't I know?"

His eyes flashed.

"Speaking of rings," he continued, "have you ever noticed this one of mine? No, not the hyacinth—that's quite commonplace. This."

He took off a foreign-looking ring and gave it into Greta's hands.

"What a unique setting!"

"Yes. Notice the stones."

"A diamond," she began, twisting it about.

"That's for D," he said.

"An emerald——"

"E."

"Oh, it's an initialed love-token, isn't it? *D-e*—an amethyst for *a*, a ruby for *r*, another emerald, a sapphire, and a topaz. *D-e-a-r-e-s-t—Dearest*. How very pretty!"

"Isn't it?" Drake's tone was cynical.

"And so odd!"

"There's only one just like it in all the world. There's an inscription inside. Read it."

Greta drew the ring nearer to the lamp—the letters were tiny. "*Non te scordar di me*," she read, and looked up, wonder-eyed.

"You know what that means, of course? '*Do not forget me*,' with just a shade of untranslatable Italian emphasis thrown in."

"Oh, it's from '*Aux Italiens*,' isn't it? One of my parlor-mates at school recited that. The girls adored it. We had it at all our spreads. We would just as soon have left out the pickles and sweets. Jean sang that part, you know. She really did it very well. Let me see——"

"At Paris it was——"

"Yes, it was in Paris," Drake said, starting from a reverie. "I had

known her over here—met her at Newport in her first season, and followed her across. She was beautiful—one of those heavenly blondes, with nun-like eyes, a complexion like a Dresden shepherdess, and the very devil of a mouth."

"That's as odd a combination as the ring," Greta thought.

"I was a good sort myself in those days—not very long away from Yale, and quite as honest and hopeful as Carter."

Greta brightened.

"And quite as much in love."

"Oh!" she resented.

"Carter won't turn out badly because I did. He's sure to score. You see, you're not like her. We were engaged. No one opposed the match. It was then we had the rings made—two, exactly alike—and we swore to wear them always. I came home to America. I was no idler then. It was a joy to work for her. I meant to be good to her—worthy of her——"

Greta's "Yes?" was full of girlish sympathy.

"While I was working away over here, counting off the days on my office calendar, she became a professional beauty. All London was mad about her. Famous artists were painting her and designing gowns for her. Her vogue was tremendous. Her *bon mots* were flashed up to me at breakfast from English society journals. She was presented to the Queen, and got rather more glory out of that than most girls; her photographs were in the shop windows, and all the soap-makers and perfumers were after her autographed endorsements."

"How lovely!"

"Right enough in general, perhaps, but not for her. It turned her head. She began to write me sprightly descriptions of all the disgraceful Graces she had refused to marry, and ended by sending me a heavily marked paper, announcing her betrothal to the veriest dolt of them all, with the emptiest purse and the biggest title. Not a written line, mark you—only the paper. And it

came just as I had perfected all my plans—about the house, you know, and carriages, and horses, and jewels. I was to cross on the next steamer to claim her."

"Poor man! *Wasn't* she heartless and horrid!"

"Oh, she blasted me and my career. I hadn't the moral courage to stand all that. I stopped this side of self-murder, but that was all. She sent me her wedding cards and, later, various coroneted invitations. I burned them, with her letters and photographs, and now I've nothing left but her ring. Give me the ring."

He reached impatiently for it, then paused.

"Suppose," he said, "you put it on my finger with a wish, as the children do, Miss Harmon." He laughed constrainedly. "A wish from you would be a sort of prayer."

"I wish, then, that you may forget her."

He quickly drew away the ring and replaced it on his finger. "Anything but that! I don't want to forget her—I can't! And I make my own wish—that the ring and the motto may both mean just as much to her to-day as they did that April morning in Paris!"

"But they can't," said the girl. "They ought not to, Mr. Drake. She's married, and—"

"Nevertheless, I wish it." He rose and looked down at her from his slender, towering height. "It's my only revenge."

He tossed some silver coins on the table and, smiling, said: "I've rather told my own history, Miss Harmon, but you and the charity deserve all the more for that. Perhaps some day you may see the mate to the ring. If you do—it isn't likely; the lady lives abroad—if you do, and get a chance to look into the hand that wears it—*do not forget me!*"

He turned away, and the curtains closed behind him.

Greta sighed. "What a disagreeable world! I hate such confidences! They stick in one's mind and heart like the bit of magic mirror in the

fairy tale, and everything looks out of shape forever after!"

And just here Bobby Carter came in with an ice.

"Brought it to you myself, sweetheart," he said, "and I'm going to keep people out until you've eaten it every bit. It's deadly dull flocking about by myself and thinking of you in here, holding some other fellow's hand, while he's thinking—"

"Thinking how superlatively irresistible he is if all I tell him from his hand be true," finished Greta. "Indeed, Bobby dear, when folks have their palms read it's only themselves they think about. And see how my patience is rewarded." She pointed to the silver-heaped basket. "I've made lots of people happy to-night. I've called the shy girls cruel coquettes, and the plain men heart-breakers, and the dull ones—"

"You needn't go on," Bobby grumbled. "I hate palmistry!"

"So do I, Bobby, and after we are married—"

Bobby leaned over and kissed her. Matters brightened at once. The world was right again. Greta decided it was better to view it with one's own eyes rather than through one's near-sighted neighbor's spectacles.

As she finished the ice someone was heard talking just outside the curtains. The voice was musical as a lute.

"Oh, yes," it rippled rhythmically; "once in India, by the weirdest man, and once again in London, when an astrologer cast my horoscope. But never by the hand. Do you really fancy she could read me?"

The accent was strongly English, there was an overwhelming fragrance of American Beauty roses, the *frou-frou* of a French frock, a distinctly agreeable blending of cosmopolitan airs and graces. Greta nodded good-bye to Bobby with an adoring glance, and he made way for the newcomers—a man and a woman.

The man was a wizened creature, a full head shorter than his companion. He was staring stupidly. The woman was a radiant, golden beauty,

"with eyes like a nun, a complexion like a Dresden shepherdess, and a mouth—a mouth—" Greta found herself quoting in her thoughts.

"They tell me you read fortunes by the hand," the vision began. "After we heard of you my husband here would give me no peace till I came. Which hand do you want?" She was taking off her gloves. "The left? To be sure—it's nearer the heart, *n'est ce pas?*"

She held out an exquisite little hand, her jeweled fingers twinkling like fireflies. It took but a moment to find, half-hidden by more pretentious rings, a unique circlet—on the engagement finger, too—set with a diamond, an emerald, an amethyst, a ruby, another emerald, a sapphire and a topaz—

Greta started as in a dream, and looked up from the hand to the face. The ring was as much like Drake's as the woman was like Drake's description.

"Well, what do you find?" the lady asked, with the ingenuous smile one sees only on the faces of very young children and very blonde women.

"You have an interesting palm."

"Hear that, Reggy? It's extremely good of you to say so, I'm sure. But you flatter me. No one can have had a more conventional career. Reggy and I are settled down to a very Darby-and-Joan existence. Aren't we, love?"

She raised her voice in speaking to her husband, then added to Greta, in an undertone with a subtle suggestion of encouragement—"Poor, dear man—he's *quite* deaf, you know!"

A mischievous and Machiavellian spirit took possession of the gentle Greta. She would make this beautiful coquette suffer. Minutely she rehearsed Drake's story, in so low a voice that the man, bending like an adoring and smartly dressed *Quilp* over the back of his wife's chair, strained his poor, deaf ears and wrinkled his brows grotesquely in a futile effort to understand. The lady, her cheeks alternately red and white, remembered to laugh now

and then and to toss him a careless word.

Greta was pitiless. She added little thrusts of her own, which flashed amid the trite compliments like stilettos bristling in a basket of flowers.

"How's that?" begged the husband. "Really, I couldn't quite catch that lawst!"

"Oh, she's telling me about a love affair, Reggy. Before I met you, she says. It's thrilling enough, too, but, unfortunately, if indeed it ever existed, I have forgotten it."

Her eyes pleaded with Greta.

"Oh, but you haven't," Greta said, pitilessly. "That was part of the compact, you know—not to forget."

"H-how do you mean?" Ah, the little gasp and the momentary shutting of the blue eyes, as from a twinge of pain!

"Why, the ring reminds you."

"The—the ring? Oh, but it is absurd—this palmistry! *What* ring?"

Greta turned the pretty hand about and pointed out the love-token. "This," she said. "This *D-e-a-r-e-s-t* ring."

"How clever you are! The emeralds and blue stones might have confused one by lamp-light." She was sweetly sarcastic.

"My art is intuitive," said Greta, wickedly. "It even enables me to read the inscription inside the ring."

"Fancy!" The blue eyes opened wide. "And is it '*Sylvia, from Reginald*' or only '*Mispah, my dear*'?"

Greta swept her idle hand across her brow, feigning a trance.

"What is it, now?" asked the husband, blue in the face.

"Hush, my love. She's trying to read the inscription in one of my rings. Second sight, you know."

"It is made up of several words," the naughty sibyl went on. "And it's in a foreign language—Italian. Now, isn't that true?"

The beauty nodded.

"It is '*Non te scordar di me!*'" There was a note of triumph in the clear voice. "So you can never, never forget, you see!"

And so Drake was avenged.

There was a pause, then:
 "Did she hit it, Sylvia?" the impatient husband cried.

"Yes."

"And what was it?"

"*Non te scordar di me,*," Greta answered for her.

"Why, my love, that isn't any of our mottoes, you know. I never gave——"

The beauty rose and slipped an arm about His Grace's neck.

"I know, Reggy dear," she said.

"The ring was given me when I came out of the convent by dear old Aunt Maria."

"Ow, yes. And what does the motto mean, my own?"

My lady cast a swift, amused glance at Greta over his noble head.

"It's Latin, my dear. And it means—let me see—oh, yes! it means, Aim high, if you do miss the mark!" And with another delicious laugh she carried herself and her husband out of the enclosure.

One of her American Beauty roses was on the floor. Greta picked it up. "It's all that is left of her," she mused, wearily. "She forgot to pay me. But I was such a fraud, I didn't deserve it. She must be the Duchess of Dedbroke. I wonder if Mr. Drake knew she was here. I've a mind to ask him if he would like this rose."

She pulled aside the curtains. People were going, but at the other end of the hall a pretty débutante was at the piano, singing, to her own accompaniment, that sweet little Nevin song:

"'Twas April—'twas Sunday—the day was fair—

Yes, sunny and fair, and how happy we were!"

The Duchess stood at the edge of the surrounding group.

"You wore the white dress that you loved to wear,

And two little flowers were hid in your hair—

Yes, in your hair, on that day gone by!"

On the opposite side of the hall stood Drake, head and shoulders above most of his fellows.

His eyes were downcast. He was intently listening. The ballad was well sung.

"I hope he won't see her!" gasped Greta. "Oh, I *hope* he won't see her!" She was almost praying.

"A bird sang on the swinging vine—

Yes, on the vine—and then sang not;

I took your little white hand in mine—"

Greta leaned breathlessly forward. A man had come in at the side entrance. He crossed over to Drake and respectfully addressed him. Mr. Drake's valet, of course, come to bring some message, for, with a half-regretful glance at the singer, Drake left the hall.

Greta turned delightedly toward the Duchess. He had not seen her!

"'Twas April—'twas Sunday—'twas warm sunshine—"

the girl sang on.

The Duchess sank into a chair. It was near an open window. She buried her face in her hands.

The song rippled to its questioning close—

"Have you forgot?"

One hand slipped to the Duchess's heart. Greta saw it gleaming there. And then she knew that Mr. Drake had his wish, and that the Duchess's memory, at least, was not treacherous.

"Oh, Bobby!" Greta called, a moment later, as that athletic young man hurried to her. "Go over to the flower booth and get momsey, and take us home as quickly as you can! I never was so tired! and I'll never read palms again—*never, never!*—not even for a charity!"



FEBRUARY WEATHER

A FORETASTE of the by-and-by
 Smiles in the genial sun,
 And in the azure of the sky
 Italia is outdone.
 The morning's charms of gleam and glint—
 A trillion is their sum,
 And on the fields the diamonds hint
 Of emeralds to come.
*To Beth the air's like wine
 That needs no label lent it—
 She has a valentine,
 And doesn't know who sent it!*

And now, behold! the light of Spring
 And balm of Spring is flown;
 The skies are dark and lowering
 As are Siberia's own!
 The snow, that just entranced the eye,
 Again lies like a pall,
 And even by a grate piled high
 Beth closer draws her shawl.
*In all things here below
 Her interest's grown atomic—
 She's opened it, and oh,
 Her valentine's a comic!*

EDWARD W. BARNARD.



NO FANCY MIXTURES

WATERS—Does whiskey go well with a cold, Colonel?
 COL. BLOOD—Oh, yes, but I much prefer to take my whiskey straight.



QUESTIONABLE FAVOR

WHEN Cordelia is asked as a bridesmaid to act,
 Which is often, she's always delighted;
 But she does not imagine, what's simply the fact,
 It is only as foil she's invited.
 For nature with beauty so poorly supplied her
 Almost any bride must look pretty beside her.

DOROTHY DORR.

THE BRIDE OF SAN LORENZO

By Louise Winter

THE most beautiful woman in Havana had sold herself for a title. So ran the rumor through the Opera House that night of "Faust."

Estela Diago was the reigning belle of the Cuban capital. Surely she justified the most extravagant praise of her admirers as she entered her box this night, attended by her father and the man whose diamonds sparkled on her breast and in the coils of her magnificent dark hair.

Over her jeweled fan she nodded with indolent grace to her friends in adjoining boxes. She knew what people were saying, and she was quite conscious that the vast audience was staring at her with curiosity, but she had schooled herself to play her chosen part, and her serenity was undisturbed.

The eldest of six daughters, and the beauty of an old but impoverished Cuban family, a wealthy marriage had been pointed out to Estela as her duty in life. No sacrifice had been considered too great to give her the proper setting of gowns, carriages and the other means of making a good appearance, and her sisters had uncomplainingly submitted to remain in the background that the idol of their hearts might blaze abroad.

To do her justice, Estela had protested at first against the favoritism, but her objections had been overruled.

"When you marry a prince, *hijita mia*, you can clothe your sisters in silks and laces," said her mother, soothingly.

"But, *mamaita*, there are no princes in Cuba, nothing but recently ennobled shopkeepers," Estela had answered, scornfully.

One of these same shopkeepers whom she affected to despise had begun to pay her serious attentions.

The Marques de San Lorenzo had come to Havana a barefooted boy, and by native shrewdness and unceasing toil had risen to be the richest merchant in the city. Though the great world sneered, and hinted that he had not kept his hands clean during his struggle for fortune, after he visited Italy and was ennobled by the Pope his ascent into society became assured.

There were certain houses where he was not received, but the world at large ate his dinners, danced at his balls, and offered him its fairest daughters in marriage.

He was a little man, bald of head and sharp of face, with hungry black eyes and thin, cruel lips under his heavy, dark mustache. At the time of their meeting Estela was eighteen and he forty, and she laughed at him and his wooing. She hugged her freedom to her breast, dreaming of love and happiness and all the romance of youth.

"You will take San Lorenzo when he offers himself," urged her mother.

"It would be the old story of Beauty and the Beast!" and Estela laughed merrily. "Surely you do not ask me to marry *him*!"

Her mother sighed. "Think of the advantages of such a match, my child. I hear he has bought the Valdes palace on the Calzada, and you always desired to live there."

The girl's face clouded. "Yes, but not with San Lorenzo. What has become of Antonio?"

"Your old playmate—you are not thinking of him, are you?"

"You mentioned the sale of the palace, and I remembered little Antonio, who dreamed of writing verses that should make him as famous as Lope de Vega."

"A poet! a beggar! Well, he has sold the palace to pay his father's debts, and now he has nothing, like the rest of us." Then, persuasively: "Estela, San Lorenzo will be at the Aguilars' to-night; remember, he wishes to marry you, and we are frightfully poor."

But for five years Estela resisted her fate, and it grew to be public speculation whether she would finally accept him or not.

His ardor increased with continued opposition, until the possession of her came to be his supreme ambition, and he had no eyes for other women.

Then Estela grew tired of the struggle, and gave in. It had been an unequal contest from the beginning, for she had known that a wealthy marriage was her only means of re-quitting her family for their devotion.

Many had wooed her, but she was schooled in repression and had yielded her favor to none.

To-night, as she faced her world, a tremor swept through her of fear for the future, of regret for the past. And the past was present in the person of one who had long been absent. As she lowered her gaze to the par-quet she met the burning, compelling look of a man who seemed to draw her soul to his. She recognized him instantly, and her face suddenly burned with happiness.

"At whom are you looking so intently, Estela *mia*?" breathed San Lorenzo in her ear.

Estela smiled radiantly. "It is my old friend, Antonio Valdes. I did not know he had returned to Havana," she answered.

"There must be no old friends, no new friends; I am to be everything to you!" cried San Lorenzo, sharply.

"If you can. You remember I made no pretense of love. I will marry you because you are rich, that is all. Make me love you if you can!"

And her tone indicated that she thought such a task impossible.

As they left the Opera House and passed between the rows of young men who lined the passageway to the street, Estela's eyes sought and found Antonio's, and in the rapid interchange of glances was a mutual confession of love.

Estela's window overlooked a deserted garden where as children she and Antonio had played together under the trees and had splashed barefoot in the old stone fountain; where, too, in after times she had sat on the stone seat while he lay on the grass at her feet and recited his verses.

Very dear had been those old days of childhood and youth, but when her parents had realized that she was fourteen and Antonio seventeen their intimacy was abruptly ended. Antonio came to the house, but he no longer saw her alone, and though she rebelled openly she was too honorable to meet him secretly. But at night she knew he went to the old garden, and often when she opened her blinds in the morning she would find a copy of some delicate verses that he had thrown up to her balcony.

He had gone away filled with the desire to make a name for himself, and Estela had not heard of him in years. Now, at last, he had returned, just when she had pledged herself to another.

Marta, her old nurse, took the fillet of diamonds from her hair and placed it reverently in the satin case.

"So *niña* Estela will be a marquesa," she said, with the familiarity of an old servant.

"Perhaps," answered Estela, mus-ingly; "unless my prince turns up. You would prefer me to marry a prince, wouldn't you, Marta?"

Marta fumbled with the clasp of the diamond necklace. "I would rather you married Don Antonio," she whispered, rapidly.

"Oh!" and Estela bit her lip, as if in pain. "Hush! what are you saying?"

"Señorita, have you seen him?"

"Yes, yes, to-night, at the opera."

"He said he should go. I met him in the street to-day, and he asked for you, and he gave me this. I was afraid to give it to you before the señora."

Estela took the package and unwrapped it hastily. It was a small book, exquisitely bound, and lettered in gold: "*Mi Reina, Mi Corazon!*" It was a collection of his poems. Many of them she was certain, and the others she felt, had been written to her.

Long after she had dismissed Marta she sat poring over these passionate avowals of his love, and when her pain had grown too great to be borne silently she put down the book and opened the shutters leading to her balcony.

"Surely my thoughts must reach to him! If I could only tell him that I understand!" she whispered. The soft night air kissed her hot cheeks, and the leaves in the garden below murmured their sympathy.

"I am betrothed—I must not forget that!" she added, trying to quiet the pain in her heart.

San Lorenzo came to breakfast at eleven.

In the morning light he looked older and uglier than ever, and Estela shrank from the touch of his lips on her hand. He presented her with a jewel case, and she opened it mechanically. A superb necklace of turquoises and diamonds greeted her eyes.

"San Lorenzo, how beautiful!" exclaimed her mother, rapturously, and the younger girls crowding around uttered cries of delight.

Estela relinquished the case into her mother's hands. Turquoises were her favorite stones. Antonio had promised her a girdle of them when he achieved fame and fortune, and now she was to wear this necklace as the price of her soul.

"Why don't you say something, *niña*? It is magnificent!" admonished Señora de Diago, sharply, but Estela only smiled.

"San Lorenzo understands one always decks the victim in a sacrifice," she said, insolently.

For a moment San Lorenzo looked hatred at the beautiful, cold woman so soon to be his wife. He almost contemplated giving her her liberty and allowing gossip to say the worst, as it certainly would in the case of a broken engagement; then the fierce desire to hold her in his arms, to tame her, rose in his heart, and he stifled his better impulse.

Estela complained of a headache and ate no breakfast; but San Lorenzo appeared to enjoy the modest repast, and tried to make himself agreeable to all the members of the family.

Carmen, the second daughter, watched him from under her heavy-lidded eyes. She had none of Estela's beauty, but she had a sharp tongue and a keen wit.

"He will crush the spirit out of Estela, but I could crush the devil out of him. If I could only try!" she thought; and then she turned and made some caustic comment on his enemy, the Marques de Campostelo.

San Lorenzo laughed, and showed his gleaming white teeth in appreciation. "So he looks like a rabbit, you think, with his long face and big ears?" he repeated; and then he glanced at Estela.

Campostelo had been a rival suitor for her hand, but she had dismissed him as she had the others, and now she met her fiancé's eyes fearlessly.

"Better look like a rabbit than a wolf; it is not so dangerous," she drawled, maliciously. "You know you have always said that San Lorenzo looks like a hungry wolf, Carmen."

Carmen paled, but she was sitting next to San Lorenzo, and under cover of the laugh that followed her discomfiture she whispered to him, rapidly: "That is because I am afraid of you. I feel as if you wanted to eat me."

San Lorenzo turned his head in her direction, and met her eyes.

Curious, green eyes they were, shadowed by long black lashes, and languorous and alluring.

For one moment he gazed, then his

evil face darkened. "So I do when you look at me like that," he answered, in tones as low as her own.

Carmen thrilled with triumph; she had won a moment's consideration on her own account. He had gazed at her, spoken to her as a woman, not merely as a member of his fiancée's family.

"What would you give me if I rid you of San Lorenzo?" she asked of Estela, later in the day.

Estela was sewing. She glanced up from her work in amazement.

"Rid me of him! What do you mean?" she demanded in return.

Carmen drew up a stool and sat at her sister's feet. "You hate him—don't protest, *hermana mia*; let us be truthful—you hate him, and you love Antonio Valdes," she began.

"Carmen!" ejaculated Estela, sharply.

"I know what I am talking about. Last night, after you sent Marta away, you did not go to bed—you sat for hours poring over a little white book, and then you went out on your balcony and cried. I saw the book, and I knew that it was Antonio's verses. Poor Antonio, how he loved you. And you promised to wait for him; you know you did, Estela."

Every word that Carmen uttered made Estela's wound bleed afresh, and the younger girl, feeling more sure of her ground, went on: "Of course you were both children then, but I can't help feeling that neither of you has forgotten, and if San Lorenzo would only set you free and take me in your stead, it would keep the money in the family and give you your chance of happiness."

Estela smiled derisively. "Do you think he will give me up for you, little sister?"

Carmen's eyes darkened with anger. "Stranger things than that have happened," she ventured.

But Estela shook her head. "You talk nonsense, Carmen. San Lorenzo has loved me for five years; it is my beauty he admires, not my heart, not my intellect; and what would you offer him instead? You are not even pretty, my sister. Forgive me if I speak

plainly, but you asked for the truth between us, and truth is often brutal."

"You took all the beauty there was in the family, Estela; nevertheless, if you will let me try, I think I can take San Lorenzo from you," and Carmen's voice shook with emotion.

"Try, then; you have my good wishes, but I fear your plan is hopeless," returned Estela, indulgently.

That night, at the opera, Carmen, dressed simply in gray, sat modestly beside Estela, and seemed to shrink from the blaze of admiration that enveloped her beautiful sister.

Once she dropped her fan, and San Lorenzo stooped to pick it up.

As he handed it to her he touched her fingers, and the touch thrilled him strangely. He looked into her eyes; they glowed with fire, and her mouth trembled.

Greatly disturbed, he moved closer to Estela and reveled in the thought that the most beautiful woman in Havana had promised to be his wife; but in spite of himself his glances strayed now and then to the slight little gray-clad figure with the maddening eyes.

Estela was gazing down into the parquet, where Antonio sat worshipping her, and her unhappiness was for a time forgotten.

After the second act he made his way to her box.

Diago greeted him warmly. Antonio was the son of an old friend, and he questioned him about his stay abroad and the success he was beginning to enjoy.

Estela said little, but the smile that lingered about her lips was enough for Antonio.

"That wretched little upstart may have won her promise, but I still hold her heart," he said to himself as he left the Opera House.

Again that night Estela sought her balcony, dreaming of the past. "Antonio, Antonio!" She breathed his name softly, and then, as if in answer, to her ears came wafted gently: "Estela, *mi reina*!"

Did she imagine it, or was there a stir among the trees in the old gar-

den? She listened intently, strained her eyes, and finally made out a shadowy form beside the old wall.

"Estela!" came once more that soft whisper.

"Oh! It is you, Antonio!"

"Just one word." He was standing close to the wall, almost underneath her balcony. "Ah, my soul! my queen! Tell me, do you still love me?"

Estela trembled. "Yes," she murmured. "But go, go, Antonio, I beseech you!" she implored. "Someone will overhear!"

"Say it but once again," he pleaded.

"I love you. *Adios!*"

She was gone, and the poet was left to his varied reflections.

Antonio had won fame and some money abroad, and he had come home to claim the woman he had installed in his heart, only to find that he was too late. But the bitterness of his discovery was mitigated by the shy avowal he had surprised in her eyes the night before, and now he was willing to dare all things for her sake, since she had confessed she loved him.

Each night thereafter he repaired to the old garden, and each night Estela appeared for a few moments on her balcony. To her these half-hours were the only bright spots in her long days, for she still doubted Carmen's ability to effect the transfer of San Lorenzo's affections, and she herself dared not break the engagement.

Her father was deeply involved in debt, and only the prospect of her marriage kept the creditors at bay. If she broke with San Lorenzo she would ruin her parents, and after the sacrifices they had made for her she could not buy her happiness at such a price.

But Carmen was still confident of ultimate success. As Estela's manner became more mocking, her own grew yielding, until San Lorenzo began to turn to her for comfort after every rebuff from his fiancée.

One night, as he assisted her to alight from the carriage, her foot slipped and she fell into his arms.

For a moment she made no effort to free herself, and her lips brushed against his cheek. "Wolf, let me go!" she murmured.

His arms closed around her.

"Never! I shall eat you now!" he replied, exultantly; but Carmen, fearing she had gone too far, struggled from his embrace.

Estela had witnessed the little comedy with wonder, and when Carmen followed her into her room, she asked: "How could you let the beast hold you in his arms?"

"I stumbled."

"Purposely?"

Carmen shrugged her shoulders.

"Don't do anything foolish," Estela warned, coldly. "I could not accept my liberty at the expense of your good name."

Carmen's eyes flashed. "You are more careful of *my* good name than you are of your own!" she retorted, hotly.

"What do you mean?"

"Merely that you are willing enough to meet Antonio at night, when you think no one knows."

"Carmen, I only speak to him from my balcony," protested Estela.

"I know, but each night, when you open your shutters, I lie awake and listen until you close them again, so that I can warn you if others suspect and come to spy on you. Don't thank me; it is my game as well as yours; but don't play the hypocrite with me. I intend to marry San Lorenzo, and when you get your freedom I suppose you will marry Antonio. Why you should wish for a continuance of poverty I cannot understand. I should think you would be sick of it; but each to her own taste. Will you give me your white mull, Estela? I want something pretty to wear to the Marques's fête."

Estela went to her wardrobe. "Choose what you wish; make yourself as attractive as you can, and good luck to you, my little Marquesa!" she said, as she opened the door with a flourish.

Carmen examined the contents critically. "This time next year I

shall not be wearing your old clothes," she remarked. "I want only the white mull; it suits my plans to dress simply."

Estela's eyes were full of interest. "Child, you are very young to tempt fate, and you are so clever I am beginning to realize that you may succeed." She spoke musingly. "I am almost afraid to let you go on. Remember, marriage is a bond you cannot break."

Carmen laughed. "Do you wish to draw back? Are you regretting your part of the bargain?" she demanded.

Estela's face clouded. "If trouble comes to you I shall blame myself for it."

"Trouble!" repeated Carmen, scornfully. "My troubles will end the day I become San Lorenzo's bride. There is no misery like being poor, and I hate trying to keep up appearances on nothing a year!"

Estela sighed, but said no more. She had not breathed a word of Carmen's scheme to Antonio. Until to-night it had seemed wholly visionary. Now it must be confronted as a possibility. If it proved successful, she would be free to bestow her hand where her heart had already gone.

San Lorenzo was giving a fête to celebrate his saint's day.

All fashionable Havana was invited, and many accepted for the sake of the future Marquesa, whose nuptial day was set for a month hence.

As Estela stood beside her betrothed, to receive his guests, her beauty seemed divine. She was robed in soft, shimmering folds of white, and on her breast was a rose-wreath of diamonds, his latest gift.

When Antonio was announced a faint flush rose to her cheek, and her hand touched his guiltily.

After a while he drifted to her side again. "How strange to think that you will be mistress here, after all," he murmured, glancing down the long gallery. "San Lorenzo has restored its pristine beauties, and only

to-night have I realized what my home was in the days of its grandeur."

Estela's face contracted with pain. "Does it hurt you to see your old home in his possession?" she asked, tenderly.

"Not so much as to know that he will possess you; you, who are dearer to me than any palace of stone could ever be," he answered, passionately. "Oh, Estela, give him up! I will work for you—for your family! Give him up, and let our love have its way!"

"Antonio, wait! Perhaps there is a chance—I cannot say more to-night. Hush! they are watching us; not a word before my father!"

Meanwhile, Carmen, her delicate face alight with eagerness, had drawn San Lorenzo to her side. She looked very young and very pure in her white dress, cut away just enough to show her full throat.

"How happy Estela ought to be! She will be mistress of this palace and of you!" she said, softly.

"It is I who should be happy as our wedding day draws near!" he answered, uneasily.

Carmen sighed. "If she only loved you!"

"She has never pretended to love me." He laughed bitterly.

"No, and she never will love you. She marries you merely because you are the richest of all her suitors."

"I know."

"But it is hard on you. You are so generous; you have crowned her with jewels; and to another, who would treasure a flower from your hand, you give nothing." Her words were so faint that he could not be sure he caught their meaning.

"No woman could love me for myself. I am old, I am ugly, but I am rich, and I will have the best for my money!" His voice grew strident, but Carmen's hand on his arm quieted him.

"And is beauty the best?" she queried.

He looked at her mistrustfully.

"Would not a warm, loving heart next your own be better?" she con-

tinued. "Some woman's white arms about your neck, some woman's head resting on your breast, some woman's lips seeking yours—would not that be better?"

He gazed at the little figure, quivering with excitement, the face flushed, the mysterious eyes ablaze, and his heart leaped.

"Carmen! you!" he cried, drawing his breath quickly; but she shrank from him in apparent terror. Her face paled, and her head drooped pitifully. "I have betrayed myself," she said, with a sob. "Oh, forget my madness, if you can, and think mercifully of me!"

She glided away from him before he could protest, and mechanically he resumed his duties as host. Ever before his eyes was the pathetic little figure in white with the wonderful green eyes; ever in his ears sounded the liquid tones of her voice. "Some woman's white arms about your neck, some woman's lips seeking yours—would not that be better?" Would it? And his whole soul answered yes.

Carmen sat opposite him at the supper table; her first glance was full of shy entreaty, then she grew bolder, and before they rose from the table she had challenged his eyes, and had been confirmed in her triumph.

"Estela, the game is in my hands, and to-day he will sue for terms," she confided to her sister, as they drove home in the early morning. And Estela, full of her own sweet dreams, sighed gently.

"I only hope you will not live to regret it," she said.

When San Lorenzo called that afternoon Estela was not visible. A violent headache kept her a prisoner in her room, her mother explained, and she begged to be excused.

He accepted her excuses languidly, and listened to Señora de Diago's praise of last night's fête, but his eyes wandered to the door expectantly, and finally he could bear the suspense no longer.

"Where is Carmen?" he asked, abruptly.

Señora de Diago looked around in

vague surprise. "I don't know; she was here when you knocked. Carmen, come here!" she called, and then Carmen appeared in the open doorway. She greeted San Lorenzo shyly, as if she dared not meet his eyes, but when her mother left the *sala* for a moment she flashed him a reproachful glance.

"Why did you ask for me?" she cried. "Isn't it hard enough to know you are in the house, without being forced to meet you! Ah, I thought I should die with shame after last night, and I don't know how I can bear it for another month."

"Carmen, I, too, have suffered! I don't know what has come over me, but I love you, sweetheart, I love you!" he answered.

"Hush! think what you are saying!" she warned, but he became reckless. The fire smouldering in her weird eyes kindled his inflammable nature.

"I think of nothing but that I love you—you—and only you!" he said, going close to her.

"And Estela?"

"Ah, Estela——"

"You see we are both mad. You must not try to see me again. I will keep out of your way, and when you have married my sister it will be easy to forget me."

"Never!"

"Then what is to be done?" There was a note of despair in her voice that wrung his heart. He had not thought of the future; this turn of affairs had come about so suddenly that there had been no time to consider consequences.

"One thing I know," he muttered, fiercely. "I cannot—will not—give you up!"

"Unless you set Estela free——"

He started, but she went on: "She never cared for you; it was to save our father from ruin that she consented to marry you, and if you let her break the engagement it will not hurt her pride. As for father, he will do anything we ask, and you will still remain in the family. That is the only way to make me yours."

He was silent. Once more those words echoed in his heart: "Some woman's white arms about your neck, some woman's lips seeking yours;" and he turned to her impulsively. "For your love I would give my soul!" he cried.

"Ah," she answered, softly, stealing her hand into his, "you love me even as I love you."

For a moment they stood facing each other in tense silence; then Carmen heard her mother returning. "Not a word of this to my mother; let me settle it. Go now, and tomorrow come and claim me openly."

Half-dazed by his passion and the rapidity of recent events, San Lorenzo obeyed, and as the street door closed after him, Carmen flew up stairs to Estela.

"Estela, you are free! Write, write to him at once! I will see father and win his consent to the change. You must admit that it is not beauty alone that is powerful!" and she threw her arms about her sister's neck, and laughed hysterically.

"Carmen, you will not regret?" demanded Estela, earnestly.

"Shall you?"

A little smile played about Estela's lips. "No, for freedom gives me the man I love; and a competence with him is more than unlimited wealth with another," she answered, softly.

"Estela, you may not believe it, but I am really fond of San Lorenzo," admitted Carmen, with a blush. "It is not all ambition."

It was a delicious bit of gossip for Havana's smart circle, but no one

questioned the wisdom of the substitution of brides. Carmen was married to the Marques on the day that had been appointed for her sister's wedding, and people seeing the adoration in his eyes, marveled, and did not doubt the verity of her conquest.

Estela's marriage to Antonio, which occurred some six months later, caused a fresh ripple of excitement.

She was radiant in her wedding robes of silk and lace, a wreath of flowers crowning the head that had worn a chaplet of diamonds, and her soft, dark eyes were suffused with love.

Carmen, beaming with matronly importance, rivaled the bride in the attention she received.

"Now are you satisfied, *hermana mia*?" she questioned, playfully.

"Need you ask?" and Estela smiled.

"And you?"

Carmen laughed joyously. "I have drawn the fangs of my wolf, and now he is merely a watch dog," she replied. "As I said long ago, each to her taste—you for love only—I for love of the good things of life, and my Marques."

San Lorenzo came to his wife's side. He had accepted the new conditions without a murmur.

"Are you happy, wolf?" she added, indulgently.

He put his arm about her waist. "Yes, for I have eaten my lamb," he answered, adoringly.

Again Carmen laughed as she turned to Estela. "You see *that* is a matter of opinion. So is happiness, *querida mia*," she added.



AN EVENT

THERE was sound of deep rejoicing round the throne of Grace Imperial,
Of happy, holy revelry, and joy beyond concern;
At last from Earth had fluttered, all the way through space ethereal,
A prayer of wholesome praise that begged no favor in return.

FRANCIS JAMES MACBEATH.